

S E R M O N S

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

By the most Reverend

Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON,

L A T E

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

VOLUME *the* SECOND.

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J. Rivington, and J. Ward.

M DCCXLVIII.

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LATE

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SECOND

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J. Richardson, and J. Ward.

MDCCLXVIII.

A
S E R M O N

Preached at the

First GENERAL MEETING

OF THE

GENTLEMEN and others born within
the County of *York*.

MEMORIAL

Presented at the

First General Meeting

OF THE

COMMITTEES and others born within
the County of York.

FRIENDS *and* COUNTRYMEN,

Stewards of the YORKSHIRE Feast.

THIS sermon, which was first preached, and is now published at your desires, I dedicate to your names, to whose prudence and care the direction and management of this first general meeting of our countrymen was committed; heartily wishing that it may be some way serviceable

6 EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

to the healing of our unhappy differences, and the restoring of unity and charity among christians, especially those of the protestant reform'd religion. I am,

GENTLEMEN,

Your affectionate Countryman

and humble Servant,

JO. TILLOTSON

S E R M O N XX.

Preached at the first general meeting
of the gentlemen and others, in and
near *London*, born within the county
of *York*.

J O H N xiii. 34, 35.

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.

AS the christian religion in general, is the best philosophy and most perfect institution of life; containing in it the most entire and complete system of moral rules and precepts that was ever yet extant in the world: so it peculiarly excels in the doctrine of love and charity; earnestly recommending, strictly enjoining, and vehemently and almost perpetually pressing and inculcating the excellency and necessity of this best of graces and virtues; and propounding to us for our imitation and encouragement, the most lively and heroical example of kindness and charity, that ever was, in the life and death of the great founder of our religion, *the author and finisher of our faith*, JESUS the SON of GOD.

So that the gospel, as it hath in all other parts of our duty cleared the dimness and obscurity of natural light, and supplied the imperfections of former revelations, so doth it most eminently reign and triumph in this great and blessed virtue of charity; in which all the philosophy and religions

religions that had been before in the world, whether jewish or pagan, were so remarkably defective.

With great reason then doth our blessed SAVIOUR call this *a new commandment*, and assert it to himself as a thing peculiar to his doctrine and religion; considering how imperfectly it had been taught and how little it had been practised in the world before: *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.*

I shall reduce my discourse upon these words under these six heads.

First, to enquire in what sense our SAVIOUR calls this commandment of loving one another *a new commandment*.

Secondly, to declare to you the nature of this commandment, by instancing in the chief acts and properties of love.

Thirdly, to consider the degrees and measures of our charity with regard to the several objects about which it is exercised.

Fourthly, our obligation to this duty not only from our SAVIOUR's authority, but likewise from our own nature, and from the reasonableness and excellency of the thing commanded.

Fifthly, the great *example* which is here propounded to our imitation; *as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*

Sixthly and lastly, the place and rank which this precept holds in the christian religion. Our SAVIOUR makes it the proper badge of a disciple, the distinctive mark and character of our profession; *by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.*

I. In what sense our SAVIOUR calls this commandment of loving one another, *a new commandment*; not that it is absolutely and altogether new, but upon some special accounts. For it is a branch of the ancient and primitive law of nature. Aristotle truly observes that upon

er. 20. in London, Dec. 3, 1678.

upon grounds of natural kindred and likeness all men are friends, and kindly disposed towards one another. And it is a known precept of the jewish religion, to love our neighbour as ourselves.

In some sense then, it is no new commandment; and so St. John, who was most likely to understand our SAVIOUR's meaning in this particular, (all his preaching and writing being almost nothing else but an inculcating of this one precept) explains this matter, telling us that in several respects it was, and it was not a new commandment, 1 John ii. 7, 8. *Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but that which ye had from the beginning; that is, from ancient times: but then he corrects himself; Again, wdsay, but yet, a new commandment I write unto you. So that though it was not absolutely new, yet upon divers considerable accounts it was so, and in a peculiar manner proper to the evangelical institution; and is in so express and particular a manner ascribed to the teaching of the HOLY GHOST, which was conferr'd upon christians by the faith of the gospel, as if there hardly needed any outward instruction and exhortation to that purpose, 1 Thess. iv. 9. But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I writ unto you, for ye yourselves are doxodaxoi, divinely taught and inspired to love one another.*

This commandment then of loving one another is by our LORD and SAVIOUR so much enlarged as to the object of it, beyond what either the Jews or heathens did understand it to be, extending to all mankind, and even to our greatest enemies; so greatly advanced and heightened as to the degree of it, even to the laying down of our lives for one another; so effectually taught, so mightily encouraged, so very much urged and insisted upon, that it may very well be called a new commandment; for though it was not altogether unknown to mankind before, yet it was never so taught, so encouraged; never was such an illustrious example given of it, never so much weight and stress laid upon it by any philosophy or religion that was before in the world.

II. I shall endeavour to declare to you the nature of this commandment, or the duty required by it. And that will best be done, by instancing in the chief acts and properties of love and charity. As, humanity and kindness in all our carriage and behaviour towards one another; for love smooths the dispositions of men so that they are not apt to grate upon one another: next, to rejoice in the good and happiness of one another, and to grieve at their evils and sufferings; for love unites the interests of men so as to make them affected with what happens to another as if it were in some sort their own case: then, to contribute as much as in us lies to the happiness of one another, by relieving one another's wants and redressing their misfortunes: again, tenderness of their good name and reputation; a proneness to interpret all the words and actions of men to the best sense; patience and forbearance towards one another; and when differences happen, to manage them with all possible calmness and kindness, and to be ready to forgive and to be reconciled to one another; to pray one for another; and if occasion be, at least if the publick good of christianity require it, to be ready to lay down our lives for our brethren, and to sacrifice ourselves for the furtherance of their salvation.

III. We will consider the degrees and measures of our charity, with regard to the various objects about which it is exercised.

And as to the negative part of this duty, it is to be extended equally towards all. We are not to hate or bear ill-will to any man, or to do him any harm or mischief; love worketh no evil to his neighbour. Thus much charity we are to exercise towards all without any exception, without any difference.

And as to the positive part of this duty, we should bear an universal good-will to all men, wishing every man's happiness, and praying for it as heartily as for our own: and if we be sincere herein, we shall be ready upon all occasions to procure and promote the welfare of all men. But the outward acts and testimonies of our charity neither can be actually extended to all, nor ought to be to all alike. We do not know the wants of all, and there-

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fore our knowledge of persons, and of their conditions, doth necessarily limit the effects of our charity within a certain compass; and of those we do know, we can but relieve a small part for want of ability. Whence it becomes necessary, that we set some rules to ourselves for the more discreet ordering of our charity; such as these: cases of extremity ought to take place of all other. Obligations of nature, and nearness of relation, seem to challenge the next place. Obligations of kindness, and upon the account of benefits received, may well lay the next claim. And then the household of faith is to be peculiarly considered. And after these, the merit of the persons, and all circumstances belonging to them, are to be weighed and valued; those who labour in an honest calling, but are oppress'd with their charge; those who are fallen from a plentiful condition, especially by misfortune and the providence of God, without their own fault; those who have relieved others, and have been eminently charitable and beneficial to mankind; and lastly, those whose visible necessities and infirmities of body or mind, whether by age or by accident, do plead for them: all these do challenge our more especial regard and consideration.

IV. We will consider our obligations to this duty, not only from our SAVIOUR's authority, but likewise from our own nature, and from the reasonableness and excellency of the thing commanded. This is the commandment of the SON of GOD, who came down from heaven with full authority to declare the will of GOD to us. And this is peculiarly *his commandment*, which he urgeth upon his disciples so earnestly, and so as if he almost required nothing else in comparison of this. John xv. 12. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another: And verse 17. These things I command you, that ye love one another.* As if this were the end of all his precepts, and of his whole doctrine, to bring us to the practice of this duty. And so St. John, the loving and beloved disciple, speaks of it as the great message which the SON of GOD was to deliver to mankind, 1 John iii. 11. *This is the message which ye have heard from the beginning, that ye should love one another.* And

And ver. 23. This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son JESUS CHRIST, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And chap. iv. ver. 21. This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth GOD, love his brother also.

But besides the authority of our SAVIOUR, we have precedent obligation to it from our own nature, and from the reasonableness and excellency of the thing itself. The frame of our nature disposeth us to it, and our inclination to society, in which there can be no pleasure, no advantage, without mutual love and kindness. And equity also calls for it, for that we ourselves wish and expect kindness from others is conviction enough to us that we owe it to others. The fulfilling of this law is the great perfection of our natures, the advancement and enlargement of our souls; the chief ornament and beauty of a great mind. It makes us like to GOD, the best and most perfect and happiest being, in that which is the prime excellency and happiness and glory of the divine nature.

And the advantages of this temper are unspeakable and innumerable. It freeth our souls from those unruly and troublesome and disquieting passions, which are the great torment of our spirits; from anger and envy, from malice and revenge, from jealousy and discontent. It makes our minds calm and cheerful, and puts our souls into an easy posture, and into good humour, and maintains us in the possession and enjoyment of ourselves: it preserves men from many mischiefs and inconveniences, to which enmity and ill-will do perpetually expose them: it is apt to make friends, and to gain enemies, and to render every condition either pleasant, or easy, or tolerable to us. So that to love others, is the truest love to ourselves, and doth redound to our own unspeakable benefit and advantage in all respects.

It is a very considerable part of our duty, and almost equall'd by our SAVIOUR with the first and great commandment of the law. It is highly acceptable to GOD, most beneficial to others, and very comfortable to ourselves. It is the easiest of all duties, and it makes all

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others easy; the pleasure of it makes the pains to signify nothing, and the delightful reflexion upon it afterwards is a most ample reward of it. It is a duty in every man's power to perform, how strait and indigent soever his fortune and condition may be. The poorest man may be as charitable as a prince; he may have as much kindness in his heart, though his hand cannot be so bountiful and munificent. Our SAVIOUR instanceth in the giving of a cup of cold water, as a charity that will be highly accepted and rewarded by GOD. And one of the most celebrated charities that ever was, how small was it for the matter of it, and yet how great in regard of the mind that gave it? I mean the widow's two mites, which she cast into the treasury: one could hardly give less, and yet none can give more, for she gave all that she had. All these excellencies and advantages of love and charity, which I have briefly recounted, are so many arguments, so many obligations to the practice of this duty.

V. We will consider the great instance and example which is here propounded to our imitation; *as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.* The SON of GOD's becoming man, his whole life, his bitter death and passion, all that he did and all that he suffered, was one great and continued proof and evidence of his mighty love to mankind. The greatest instance of love among men, and that too but very rare, is for a man to lay down his life for another, for his friend; but the SON of GOD died for all mankind, and we were all his enemies. And should we not chearfully imitate the example of that great love and charity, the effects whereof are so comfortable, so beneficial, so happy to every one of us. Had he not loved us, and died for us, we had certainly perished, we had been miserable and undone to all eternity.

And to perpetuate this great example of charity, and that it might be always fresh in our memories, the great sacrament of our religion was on purpose instituted for the commemoration of this great love of the SON of GOD, in laying down his life, and shedding his precious blood for the wicked and rebellious race of mankind. But I

have not time to enlarge upon this noble argument as it deserves.

VI. The last thing to be considered is the place and rank which this precept and duty holds in the christian religion. Our blessed SAVIOUR here makes it the proper badge and cognisance of our profession: *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.* The different sects among the Jews had some peculiar character to distinguish them from one another: the scholars of the several great rabbi's among them had some peculiar sayings and opinions, some customs and traditions whereby they were severally known; and so likewise the disciples of John the Baptist were particularly remarkable for their great austerities. In allusion to these distinctions of sects and schools among the Jews, our SAVIOUR fixeth upon this mark and character whereby his disciples should be known from the disciples of any other institution, a mighty love and affection to one another.

Other sects were distinguish'd by little opinions, or by some external rites and observances in religion; but our SAVIOUR pitcheth upon that which is the most real and substantial, the most large and extensive, the most useful and beneficial, the most humane and the most divine quality of which we are capable.

This was his great commandment to his disciples, before he left the world: this was the legacy he left them, and the effect of his last prayers for them: and for this end, among others, he instituted the sacrament of his blessed body and blood, to be a lively remembrance of his great charity to mankind, and a perpetual bond of love and union amongst his followers.

And the apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR do upon all occasions recommend this to us, as a principal duty and part of our religion; telling us, that in CHRIST JESUS, that is, in the christian religion, nothing will avail, no not faith itself, unless it be enlivened and inspired by charity; that love is the end of the commandment, *τέλος τῆ παραγγελίας*, the end of the evangelical declaration, the first fruit of the SPIRIT, the spring and

root

root of all those graces and virtues which concern our duty towards one another: that is the sum and abridgement, the accomplishment and fulfilling of the whole law: that without this, whatever we pretend to in christianity, we are nothing, and our religion is vain: that this is the greatest of all graces and virtues, greater than faith and hope; and of perpetual use and duration, charity never fails.

And therefore they exhort us above all things to endeavour after it, as the crown of all other virtues: *Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves*, saith St. Peter: and St. Paul, having enumerated most other christian virtues, exhorts us above all to strive after this, *and above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfection*. This St. John makes one of the most certain signs of our love to God, and the want of it an undeniable argument of the contrary: *If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* This he declares to be one of the best evidences that we are in a state of grace and salvation, *Hereby we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren*.

So that well might our blessed SAVIOUR choose this for the badge of his disciples, and make it the great precept of the best and most perfect institution. Other things might have served better for pomp and ostentation, and have more gratified the curiosity, or enthusiasm, or superstition of mankind, but there is no quality in the world which, upon a sober and impartial consideration, is of a more solid and intrinsick value.

And in the first ages of christianity, the christians were very eminent for this virtue, and particularly noted for it; *Nobis notam inurit apud quosdam, It is a mark and brand set upon us by some*, saith Tertullian; and he tells us, that it was proverbially said among the heathen, *Behold how these christians love one another*. Lucian, that great scoffer at all religion, acknowledgeth in behalf of christians, that this was the great principle which their master had instill'd into them: And Julian, the bitterest enemy that

christianity ever had, could not forbear to propound to the heathen for an example the charity of the Galileans, for so, by way of reproach, he calls the christians, *who* (says he) *gave up themselves to humanity and kindness*; which he acknowledgeth to have been very much to the advantage and reputation of our religion: and in the same letter to Arfacius, the heathen high-priest of Galatia, he gives this memorable testimony of the christians, that their charity was not limited and confined only to themselves, but extended even to their enemies; which could not be said either of the jews or heathens: his words are these, *It is a shame, that when the Jews suffer none of theirs to beg, and the impious Galileans relieve not only their own, but those also of our religion, that we only should be defective in so necessary a duty.* By all which it is evident that love and charity is not only the great precept of our SAVIOUR, but was in those first and best times the general practice of his disciples, and acknowledged by the heathens as a very peculiar and remarkable quality in them.

The application I shall make of this discourse shall be threefold.

1. With relation to the church of Rome.
2. With regard to ourselves who profess the protestant reform'd religion.
3. With a more particular respect to the occasion of this meeting.

I. First, with relation to the church of Rome; which we cannot choose but think of, whenever we speak of charity and loving one another; especially having had so late a discovery of their affection to us, and so considerable a testimony of the kindness and charity which they design'd towards us: such as may justly make the ears of all that hear it to tingle, and render popery execrable and infamous, a frightful and hateful thing to the end of the world.

It is now but too visible how grossly this great commandment of our SAVIOUR is contradicted, not only by the practices of those in that communion, from the pope down to the meanest frier; but by the very doctrines and principles,

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principles, by the genius and spirit of that religion, which is wholly calculated for cruelty and persecution. Where now is that mark of a disciple, so much insisted upon by our LORD and MASTER, to be found in that church? And yet what is the christian church but the society and community of CHRIST's disciples? Surely in all reason, that which our LORD made the distinctive mark and character of his disciples, should be the principal mark of a true church. Ballarmine reckons up no less than fifteen marks of the true church, all which the church of Rome arrogates to herself alone: but he wisely forgot that which is worth all the rest, and which our SAVIOUR insists upon as the chief of all other, a sincere love and charity to all christians: this he knew would by no means agree to his own church.

But for all that, it is very reasonable that churches as well as particular christians should be judged by their charity. The church of Rome would engross all faith to herself: faith in its utmost perfection, to the degree and pitch of infallibility; and they allow no body in the world, besides themselves, no though they believe all the articles of the apostles creed, to have one grain of true faith; because they do not believe upon the authority of their church, which they pretend to be the only foundation of true faith. This is a most arrogant and vain pretence; but admit it were true, yet in the judgment of St. Paul, *Though they had all faith, if they have not charity, they are nothing.*

The greatest wonder of all is this, that they who hate and persecute christians most, do all this while, the most confidently of all others, pretend to be the disciples of CHRIST, and will allow none to be so but themselves. That church which excommunicates all other christian churches in the world, and if she could, would extirpate them out of the world, will yet needs assume to herself to be the only christian church: as if our SAVIOUR had said, *Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye hate, and excommunicate, and kill one another. What shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? thou empty and impudent pretence of christianity!*

II. Secondly, with relation to ourselves, who profess the protestant reformed religion. How is this great precept of our SAVIOUR not only shamefully neglected, but plainly violated by us? and that not only by private hatred and ill-will, quarrels and contentions in our civil conversation and intercourse with one another; but by most unchristian divisions and animosities in that common relation wherein we stand to one another, as brethren, as christians, as protestants.

Have we not all one father? hath not one GOD created us? and are we not in a more peculiar and eminent manner brethren, being *all children of GOD by faith in JESUS CHRIST*? are we not all members of the same body, and partakers of the same spirit, and heirs of the same blessed hopes of eternal life?

So that being brethren upon so many accounts, and by so many bonds and endearments all united one to another, and all travelling towards the same heavenly country, why do we fall out by the way, since we be brethren? why do we not, as becomes brethren, dwell together in unity? but are so apt to quarrel and break out into heats, to crumble into sects and parties, to divide and separate from one another upon every slight and trifling occasion.

Give me leave a little more fully to expostulate this matter, but very calmly and in the spirit of meekness, and in the name of our dear LORD who loved us at such a rate as to die for us, to recommend to you this new commandment of his, *that ye love one another*: which is almost a new commandment still, and hardly the worse for wearing; so seldom is it put on, and so little hath it been practised among christians for several ages.

Consider seriously with yourselves; ought not the great matters wherein we are agreed, our union in the doctrines of the christian religion, and in all the necessary articles of that faith which was once delivered to the saints, in the same sacraments, and in all the substantial parts of GOD's worship, and in the great duties and virtues of the christian life, to be of greater force to unite us, than difference in doubtful opinions, and in little rites and circumstances of worship to divide and break us?

Are not the things about which we differ, in their nature indifferent, that is, things about which there ought to be no difference among wise men? Are they not at a great distance from the life and essence of religion, and rather good or bad as they tend to the peace and unity of the church, or are made use of to schism and faction, than either necessary or evil in themselves? and shall little scruples weigh so far with us, as, by breaking the peace of the church about them, to endanger our whole religion? Shall we take one another by the throat for a hundred pence, when our common adversary stands ready to clap upon us an action of ten thousand talents? can we in good earnest be contented that rather than the surplice should not be thrown out, popery should come in? and rather than receive the sacrament in the humble, but indifferent, posture of kneeling, to swallow the camel of transubstantiation, and adore the elements of bread and wine for our GOD and SAVIOUR? and rather than to submit to a set form of prayer, to have the service of GOD perform'd in an unknown tongue?

Are we not yet made sensible, at least in this our day, by so clear a demonstration as the providence of GOD hath lately given us: and had not he been infinitely merciful to us, might have proved the dearest and most dangerous experiment that ever was: I say, are we not yet convinced, what mighty advantages our enemies have made of our divisions, and what a plentiful harvest they have had among us, during our differences, and upon occasion of our enmities; and how near their religion was to have enter'd upon us at once, at those wide breaches which we had made for it? And will we still take counsel of our enemies, and choose to follow that course to which, of all others, they who hate us and seek our ruin would most certainly advise and direct us? Will we freely offer them, in at advantage which they would be contented to purchase at any rate?

Let us, after all our sad experience, at last take warning to keep a stedfast eye upon our chief enemy, and not suffer ourselves to be diverted from the consideration and ward of our greatest danger by the petty provocations of

our friends; so I choose to call those who dissent from us in lesser matters, because I would fain have them so, and they ought in all reason to be so: but however they behave themselves, we ought not much to mind those who only sling dirt at us, whilst we are sure there are others who fly at our throats, and strike at our very hearts.

Let us learn this wisdom of our enemies, who, though they have many great differences among themselves, yet they have made a shift at this time to unite together to destroy us: and shall not we do as much to save ourselves?

fas est & ab hoste doceri.

It was a principle among the ancient Romans, a brave and wise people, *donare inimicitias Reipublicæ*, to give up and sacrifice their private enmities and quarrels to the publick good and the safety of the commonwealth. And is it not to every considerate man as clear as the sun at noonday, that nothing can maintain and support the protestant religion amongst us, and found our church upon a rock, so that *when the rain falls, and the winds blow, and the floods beat upon it, it shall stand firm and unshaken*: That nothing can be a bulwark of sufficient force to resist all the arts and attempts of popery, but an establish'd national religion, firmly united and compacted in all the parts of it? is it not plain to every eye, that little sects and separate congregations can never do it? but will be like a foundation of sand to a weighty building, which whatever shew it may make, cannot stand long, because it wants union at the foundation, and for that reason must necessarily want strength and firmness.

It is not for private persons to undertake in matters of publick concernment; but I think we have no cause to doubt but the governors of our church (notwithstanding all the advantages of authority, and we think of reason too on our side) are persons of that piety and prudence, that for peace sake, and in order to a firm union among protestants, they would be content, if that would do it, not to insist upon little things; but to yield them up, whether to the infirmity or importunity, or, perhaps in some very few things, to the plausible exceptions of those who differ from us.

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But then surely, on the other side, men ought to bring along with them a peaceable disposition, and a mind ready to comply with the church in which they were born and baptized, in all reasonable and lawful things ; and desirous upon any terms that are tolerable to return to the communion of it : a mind free from passion and prejudice, from peevish exceptions, and groundless and endless scruples ; not apt to insist upon little cavils and objections, to which the very best things, and the greatest and clearest truths in the world are and always will be liable : and whatever they have been heretofore, to be *henceforth no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive.*

And if we were thus affected on all hands, we might yet be a happy church and nation ; if we would govern ourselves by these rules, and walk according to them, *peace would be upon us, and mercy, and on the Israel of God.*

III. Thirdly, I shall conclude all with a few words in relation to the occasion of this present meeting. I have all this while been recommending to you, from the authority and example of our blessed SAVIOUR, and from the nature and reason of the thing itself, this most excellent grace and virtue of charity, in the most proper acts and instances of it : but besides particular acts of charity to be exercised upon emergent occasions, there are likewise charitable customs which are highly commendable, because they are more certain and constant, of a larger extent, and of a longer continuance : as the meeting of the sons of the clergy, which is now form'd and establish'd into a charitable corporation : and the anniversary meetings of those of the several counties of England, who reside, or happen to be in London ; for two of the best and noblest ends that can be, the maintaining of friendship, and the promoting of charity. These, and others of the like kind, I call charitable customs, which of late years have very much obtained in this great and famous city. And it cannot but be a great pleasure and satisfaction to all good men, to see so generous, so humane, so christian a disposition to prevail and reign so much amongst us.

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The strange overflowing of vice and wickedness in our land, and the prodigious increase and impudence of infidelity and impiety, hath of late years boded very ill to us, and brought terrible judgments upon this city and nation, and seems still to threaten us with more and greater : and the greatest comfort I have had under these sad apprehensions of God's displeasure hath been this, that though bad men were perhaps never worse in any age, yet the good, who I hope are not a few, were never more truly and substantially good : I do verily believe there never were, in any time, greater and more real effects of charity ; not from a blind superstition, and an ignorant zeal, and a mercenary and arrogant and presumptuous principle of merit, but from a sound knowledge, and a sincere love and obedience to God, or, as the apostle expresses it, *out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.*

And who, that loves God and religion, can choose but take great contentment to see so general and forward an inclination in people this way ? which hath been very much cherished of late years by this sort of meetings : and that to very good purpose and effect, in many charitable contributions disposed in the best and wisest ways : and which likewise hath tended very much to the reconciling of the minds of men, and the allaying of those fierce heats and animosities which have been caused by our civil confusions and religious distractions. For there is nothing many times wanting to take away prejudice, and to extinguish hatred and ill-will, but an opportunity for men to see and understand one another ; by which they will quickly perceive, that they are not such monsters as they have been represented one to another at a distance.

We are, I think, one of the last counties of England that have entred into this friendly and charitable kind of society ; let us make amends for our late setting out by quickning our pace, so that we may overtake and outstrip those who are gone before us : let not our charity partake of the coldness of our climate, but let us endeavour that it may be equal to the extent of our country ; and as we are incomparably the greatest county of England, let

appear that we are so by the largeness and extent of our charity.

O LORD, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing, send thy HOLY GHOST, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace, and of all virtues: without which whosoever liveth, is counted dead before thee. Grant this for thy only SON JESUS CHRIST's sake.

Now the GOD of peace, who brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through JESUS CHRIST, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XXI.

preached at Whitehall, April 4, 1679.

I. JOHN iv. 1.

Do not receive into your house, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of GOD; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

THIS caution and counsel was given upon occasion of the false prophets and teachers that were risen up in the beginning of the christian church, who endeavoured to seduce men from the true doctrine of the gospel delivered by the apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR. And these teaching contrary things, could not both be from GOD; and therefore St. John calls upon christians to examine the doctrines and sentences of those new teachers, whether they were from GOD or not. *Believe not every spirit; that is, not every*

one that takes upon him to be inspired, and to be a teacher come from God: *But try the spirits*; that is, examine those that make this pretence, whether it be real or not, and examine the doctrines which they bring, because there are many impostors abroad in the world.

This is the plain sense of the words: in which there are contained these four propositions.

First, that men may, and often do, falsely pretend to inspiration. And this is the reason upon which the apostle grounds this exhortation: *because many false prophets are gone out into the world*, therefore we should try who are true, and who are false.

Secondly, we are not to believe every one that pretends to be inspired, and to teach a divine doctrine: this follows upon the former; because men may falsely pretend to inspiration, therefore we are not to believe every one that makes this pretence. For any man that hath but a confidence enough, and conscience little enough, may pretend to come from God. And if we admit all pretences of this kind, we lie at the mercy of every crafty and confident man, to be led by him into what delusions he pleaseth.

Thirdly, neither are we to reject all that pretend to come from God. This is sufficiently implied in the text, for when the apostle says, *believe not every spirit*, he supposeth we are to believe some; and when he saith, *try the spirits whether they be of God*, he supposeth some to be of God, and that those which are so are to be believed. These three observations are so plain, that I need only name them to make way for the

Fourth, which I principally designed to insist upon from these words. And that is this, *that there is some way to discern mere pretenders to inspiration, from those who are truly and divinely inspired*: and this is necessarily implied in the apostle's bidding us to *try the spirits whether they be of God*. For it were in vain to make any trial, if there be no way to discern between pretended and real inspiration.

Now the handling of this will give occasion to two or three material enquiries, and useful to be resolved.

I. How we may discern between true and counterfeit doctrines: those which really are from God, and those which only pretend to be so?

II. To whom this judgment of discerning doth appertain?

I. How we may discern between true and counterfeit doctrines and revelations? for the clearing of this I shall lay down these following propositions.

1. That reason is the faculty whereby revelations are to be discerned; or to use the phrase in the text, it is that whereby we are to judge what spirits are of God, and what not. For all revelation from God supposeth us to be men, and to be endued with reason; and therefore it does not create new faculties in us, but propounds new subjects to that faculty which was in us before. Whatever doctrines God reveals to men are propounded to their understandings, and by this faculty we are to examine all doctrines which pretend to be from God, and upon examination to judge whether there be reason to receive them as divine, or to reject them as impostures.

2. All supernatural revelation supposeth the truth of the principles of natural religion. We must first be assured that there is a God, before we can know that he hath made any revelation of himself: and we must know that his words are true, otherwise there were no sufficient reason to believe the revelations which he makes to us: and we must believe his authority over us, and that he will reward our obedience to his laws, and punish our breach of them; otherwise there would neither be sufficient obligation nor encouragement to obedience. These and many other things are supposed to be true, and naturally known to us, antecedently to all supernatural revelation; otherwise the revelations of God would signify nothing to us, nor be of any force with us.

3. All reasonings about divine revelations must necessarily be governed by the principles of natural religion: that is, by those apprehensions which men naturally have of the divine perfections, and the clear notions of good and evil which are imprinted upon our natures. Because we have no other way to judge what is worthy of God,

and credible to be revealed by him, and what not, but by the natural notions which we have of God and of his essential perfections: which, because we know him to be immutable, we have reason to believe he will never contradict. And by these principles likewise, we are to interpret what God hath revealed; and when any doubt ariseth concerning the meaning of any divine revelation (as that of the holy scriptures) we are to govern ourselves in the interpretation of it by what is most agreeable to those natural notions which we have of God, and we have all the reason in the world to reject that sense which is contrary thereto. For instance, when God is represented in scripture as having a human shape, eyes, ears and hands, the notions which men naturally have of the divine nature and perfections do sufficiently direct us to interpret these expressions in a sense worthy of God, and agreeable to his perfections: and therefore it is reasonable to understand them as rather spoken to our capacity, and in a figure, than to be literally intended. And this will proportionably hold in many other cases.

4. Nothing ought to be received as a revelation from God which plainly contradicts the principles of natural religion, or overthrows the certainty of them. For instance, it were in vain to pretend a revelation from God, *that there is no God*, because this is a contradiction in terms. So likewise to pretend a command from God, *That we are to hate and despise him*; because it is not credible that God should require any thing of reasonable creatures unsuitable to their natures, and to their obligations to him; besides that such a law as this does tacitly involve contradiction; because upon such a supposition, to despise God would be to obey him; and yet to obey him is certainly to honour him. So that in this case to honour God, and to despise him, would be the same thing, and equal contempts of him. In like manner it would be vain to pretend any revelation from God, *that there is no life after this, nor rewards and punishments in another world*, because this is contrary to those natural apprehensions which have generally possessed mankind, and would take

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away the main force and sanction of the divine laws. The like may be said concerning any pretended revelation from God, which evidently contradicts those natural notions which men have of good and evil; as, *that God should command or allow sedition and rebellion, perfidiousness and perjury*; because the practices of these would be apparently destructive of the peace and happiness of mankind, and would naturally bring confusion into the world: but God is not the God of confusion, but of order, which St. Paul appeals to as a principle naturally known. Upon the same account nothing ought to be entertained as a divine revelation which overthrows the certainty of the principles of natural religion; because that would take away the certainty of divine revelation itself, which supposeth the truth of those principles. For instance, whoever pretends any revelation that brings the providence of God into question, does by that very thing make such a revelation questionable. For if God take no care of the world, have no concernment for humane affairs, why should we believe that he makes any revelation of his will to men? And by this principle Moses will have false prophets to be tried: Deut. xiii. 1. *If there arise among you a prophet, and giveth thee a sign or wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, let us go after other gods, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet: and he gives the reason of this, ver. 3. because he hath spoken unto you to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt.* Here is a case wherein a false prophet is supposed to work a true miracle to give credit to his doctrine (which in other cases the scripture makes the sign of a true prophet) but yet in this case he is to be rejected as an impostor: because the doctrine he teacheth would draw men off from the worship of the true God who is naturally known, and had manifested himself to the people of Israel in so miraculous a manner, by bringing them out of the land of Egypt. So that a miracle is not enough to give credit to a prophet who teacheth any thing contrary to that natural notion which men have, *that there is but one God, who only ought to be worshipped.*

5. Nothing ought to be received as a divine doctrine and revelation, without good evidence that it is so : that is, without some argument sufficient to satisfy a prudent and considerate man. Now (supposing there be nothing in the matter of the revelation that is evidently contrary to the principles of natural religion, nor to any former revelation which hath already a greater and more solemn attestation from God) miracles are owned by all mankind to be a sufficient testimony to any person, or doctrine, that they are from God. This was the testimony which God gave to Moses to satisfy the people of Israel that he had sent him; *Exod. iv. 1, 2. Moses said, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice : for they will say, the LORD hath not appeared unto thee.* Upon this God endues him with a power of miracles, to be an evidence to them, *that they may believe that the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.* And all along in the old testament, when God sent his prophets to make a new revelation, or upon any strange and extraordinary message, he always gave credit to them by some sign or wonder which they foretold or wrought. And when he sent his SON into the world, he gave testimony to him by innumerable great and unquestionable miracles, more and greater than Moses and all the prophets had wrought. And there was great reason for this ; because our SAVIOUR came not only to publish a new religion to the world, but to put an end to that religion which God had instituted before. And now that the gospel hath had the confirmation of such miracles as never were wrought upon any other occasion, no evidence inferior to this can in reason controul this revelation, or give credit to any thing contrary to it. And therefore though the false prophets and Antichrists, foretold by our SAVIOUR, did really work miracles, yet they were so inconsiderate in comparison of our SAVIOUR's that they deserve no credit in opposition to that revelation which had so clear a testimony given to it from heaven by miracles, besides all other concurring arguments to confirm it.

6. And lastly, no argument is sufficient to prove a doctrine or revelation to be from God, which is not clear

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clearer and stronger than the difficulties and objections against it: because all assent is grounded upon evidence, and the strongest and clearest evidence always carries it: but where the evidence is equal on both sides, that can produce nothing but a suspense and doubt in the mind whether the thing be true or not. If Moses had not confuted Pharaoh's Magicians by working miracles which they could not work, they might reasonably have disputed it with him who had been the true prophet: but when he did works plainly above the power of their magick and the devil to do, then they submitted and acknowledged that there was the finger of God. So likewise, though a person work a miracle (which ordinarily is a good evidence that he is sent by God) yet if the doctrine he brings be plainly contrary to those natural notions which we have of God, this is a better objection against the truth of this doctrine than the other is a proof of it: as is plain in the case which Moses puts, Deut. xiii. which I mentioned before.

Upon the same account no man can reasonably believe the doctrine of transubstantiation to be revealed by God; because every man hath as great evidence that transubstantiation is false, as any man can pretend to have that God hath revealed any such thing. Suppose transubstantiation to be part of the christian doctrine, it must have the same confirmation with the whole, and that is miracles: but of all doctrines in the world it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a miracle. For if a miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very same assurance which a man hath of the truth of the miracle, he hath of the falshood of the doctrine, that is, the clear evidence of his senses for both. For that there is a miracle wrought to prove, that what he sees in the sacrament is not bread but the body of CHRIST, he hath only the evidence of his senses; and he hath the very same evidence to prove, that what he sees in the sacrament is not the body of CHRIST, but bread: So that here ariseth a new controversy, whether a man should believe his senses giving testimony against the doctrine of transubstantiation, or bearing testimony to the miracle which is wrought

to confirm that doctrine: for there is just the same evidence against the truth of the doctrine, which there is for the truth of the miracle. So that the argument for transubstantiation, and the objection against it, do just balance one another; and where the weights in both scales are equal, it is impossible that the one should weigh down the other; and consequently transubstantiation is not to be proved by a miracle; for that would be, to prove to a man by something that he sees, that he does not see what he sees.

And thus I have endeavoured, as briefly and clearly as I could, to give satisfaction to the first enquiry I propounded, viz. how we may discern between true and counterfeit revelations and doctrines: I proceed now to the

II. To whom this judgment of discerning does appertain. Whether to christians in general, or to some particular person or persons, authorised by God to judge for the rest of mankind, by whose judgment all men are concluded and bound up. And this is an enquiry of no small importance; because it is one of the most fundamental points in difference between us and the church of Rome. And however in many particular controversies, as concerning transubstantiation, the communion in one kind, the service of God in an unknown tongue; the business of indulgences, the invocation of saints, the worship of images, they are not able to offer any thing that is fit to move a reasonable and considerate man; yet in this controversy, concerning the judge of controversies, they are not destitute of some specious appearance of reason which deserves to be weighed and considered. Therefore that we may examine this matter to the bottom, I shall do these three things.

1. Lay down some cautions and limitations whereby we may understand how far the generality of christians are allowed to judge in matters of religion.

2. I shall represent the grounds of this Principle.

3. Endeavour to satisfy the main objections of our adversaries against it: and likewise to shew, that there is no such reason and necessity for an universal infallible judge as they pretend.

I. I shall lay down some cautions and limitations, by which we may understand how far the generality of christians are allowed to judge in matters of religion.

First, private persons are only to judge for themselves, and not to impose their judgment upon others, as if they had any authority over them. And this is reasonable, because if it were otherwise, a man would deprive others of that liberty which he assumes to himself, and which he can claim upon no other account, but because it belongs to others equally with himself.

Secondly, this liberty of judging is not so to be understood as to take away the necessity and use of guides and teachers in religion. Nor can this be denied to be a reasonable limitation; because the knowledge of revealed religion is not a thing born with us, nor ordinarily supernaturally infused into men; but is to be learned as other things are. And if it be to be learned, there must be some to teach and instruct others: And they that will learn must be modest and humble; and in those things, of which they are no competent judges, they must give credit to their teachers, and trust their skill: for instance, every unlearned man is to take it upon the credit of those who are skilful, that the scriptures are truly and faithfully translated; and for the understanding of obscure texts of scriptures, and more difficult points in religion, he is to rely upon those, whose proper business and employment it is to apply themselves to the understanding of these things. For in these cases every man is not capable of judging himself, and therefore he must necessarily trust others: and in all other things he ought to be modest; and unless it be in plain matters, which every man can judge of, he ought rather to distrust himself than his teacher.

And this respect may be given to a teacher without either supposing him to be infallible, or making an absolute resignation of my judgment to him. A man may be a very able teacher (suppose of the mathematicks) and fit to have the respect which is due to a teacher, tho' he be not infallible in those Sciences: and because infallibility is not necessary to such a teacher, it is neither necessary

cessary nor convenient that I should absolutely resign up my judgment to him. For though I have reason to credit him, within the compass of his art; in things which I do not know; I am not therefore bound to believe him in things plainly contrary to what I and all mankind do certainly know. For example, if upon pretence of his skill in arithmetick, which I am learning of him, he should tell me, that twice two do not make four, but five; though I believed him to be the best mathematician in the world, yet I cannot believe him in this thing: nor is there any reason I should; because I did not come to learn this of him, but knew as much of that before as he or any man else could tell me. The case is the same in matters of religion; in which there are some things so plain, and lie so level to all capacities, that every man is almost equally judge of them: As I shall have occasion farther to shew by and by.

Thirdly, neither doth this liberty of judging exempt men from a due submission and obedience to their teachers and governors. Every man is bound to obey the lawful commands of his governors; and what by publick consent and authority is determined and established, ought not to be gainsaid by private persons, but upon very clear evidence of the falshood or unlawfulness of it. And this is every man's duty, for the maintaining of order, and out of regard to the peace and unity of the church; which is not to be violated upon every scruple and frivolous pretence; and when men are perverse and disobedient, authority is to judge, and may restrain and punish them.

Fourthly, nor do I so far extend this liberty of judging in religion, as to think every man fit to dispute the controversies of religion. A great part of people are ignorant, and of so mean a capacity as not to be able to judge of the force of a very good argument, much less of the issue of a long dispute; and such persons ought not to engage in disputes of religion; but to beg God's direction and to rely upon their teachers; and above all to live up to the plain dictates of natural light, and the clear commands of God's word, and this will be their best security. And if the providence of God hath placed them

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under such guides as do seduce them into error, their ignorance is invincible, and God will not condemn them for it, so long as they sincerely endeavour to do the will of God so far as they know it. And this being the case of many, especially in the church of Rome, where ignorance is so industriously cherished I have so much charity as to hope well concerning many of them: and seeing that church teaches and enjoins the people to worship images, it is in some sense charitably done of them, not to let them know the second commandment, that they may not be guilty of sinning against so plain a law.

Having premised these cautions, I proceed in the

II. Place, to represent to you the grounds of this principle of our religion, viz. that we allow private persons to judge for themselves in matters of religion.

First, because many things in religion, especially those which are most necessary to be believed and practised, are so plain, that every man of ordinary capacity, after competent instruction in matters of religion (which is always to be supposed) can as well judge of them for himself, as any man, or company of men in the world can judge for him; because in these he hath a plain rule to go by, natural light and clear revelation of scripture. And this is no new principle of the protestants, but most expressly owned by the ancient fathers. *Whatever things are necessary, are plain,* saith St. Chrysostom. *All things are plainly contained in scripture which concern faith and a good life,* saith St. Austin. And nothing can be more reasonable than that those things which are plain to every man should be left to every man's judgment. For every man can judge of what is plain; of evident truth and falsehood, virtue and vice, of doctrines and laws plainly delivered in scripture, if we believe any thing to be so, which is next to madness to deny. I will refer it to no man's judgment upon earth to determine for me, *Whether there be a God or not? whether murder and perjury be sin?* Whether it be not plain in scripture, that *JESUS CHRIST is the SON of GOD, that he became man, and died for us, and rose again?* so that there is no need of a judge

a judge in those cases. Nor can I possibly believe any man to be so absolutely infallible, as not to call his infallibility into question, if he determines any thing contrary to what is plain and evident to all mankind. For if he should determine *that there is no God, or that he is not to be worshipped, or that he will not punish and reward men,* or, which is the case that Bellarmine puts, *that virtue is vice, and vice virtue,* he would hereby take away the very foundation of religion; and how can I look upon him any longer, as a judge in matters of religion, when there can be no such thing as religion if he have judged and determined right?

Secondly, the scripture plainly allows this liberty to particular and private persons to judge for themselves. And for this I need go no farther than my text, which bids men *try the spirits whether they be of God.* I do not think this spoken only to the pope or a general council, but to christians in general: for to these the apostle writes. Now if St. John had believed that God had constituted an infallible judge in his church, to whose sentence and determination all christians are bound to submit, he ought in all reason to have referred christians to him for the trial of spirits, and not to have left it to every man's private judgment to examine and to determine these things. But it seems St. Paul was likewise of the same mind; and though he was guided by an infallible spirit, yet he did not expect that men should blindly submit to his doctrine: nay, so far is he from that, that he commends the Bereans for that very thing for which, I dare say, the church of Rome would have check'd them most severely, namely, for searching the scriptures, to see whether those things which the apostle delivered were so or not: this liberty St. Paul allowed, and though he was inspired by God, yet he treated those whom he taught like men. And indeed, it were a hard case that a necessity of believing divine revelations, and rejecting impostures, should be imposed upon christians, and yet the liberty of judging, whether a doctrine is from God or not, should be taken away from them.

Thirdly

Thirdly, our adversaries themselves are forced to grant that which in effect is as much as we contend for. For though they deny a liberty of judging in particular points of religion, yet they are forced to grant men a liberty of judging upon the whole. When they of the church of Rome would persuade a jew or a heathen, to become a christian; or a heretick (as they are pleased to call us) to come over to the communion of their church, and offer arguments to induce them thereunto; they do by this very thing, whether they will or no, make that man judge which is the true church, and the true religion: because it would be ridiculous to persuade a man to turn to their religion, and to urge him with reasons so to do, and yet to deny him the use of his own judgment whether their reasons be sufficient to move him to make such a change. Now, if the apostle reasons in another case, if men be fit to judge for themselves in so great and important a matter as the choice of their religion, why should they be thought unworthy to judge in lesser matters? They tell us indeed that a man may use his judgment in the choice of his religion; but when he hath once chosen, he is then never to resign up his judgment to their church: but what tolerable reason can any man give, why a man should be fit to judge upon the whole, and yet unfit to judge upon particular points? especially if it be considered, that no man can make a discreet judgment of any religion, before he hath examined the particular doctrines of it, and made a judgment concerning them. Is it credible, that God should give a man judgment in the most fundamental and important matter of all, viz, to discern the true religion, and the true church, from the false; and no other end, but to enable him to choose once for all, whom he should resign and enslave his judgment for ever? which is just as reasonable as if one should say, that God hath given a man eyes for no other end, but to look out once for all, and to pitch upon a discreet person to lead him about blindfold all the days of his life. I come now to the

III. Thing I propounded, which is, to answer the objection of our adversaries against this principle;
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and likewise to shew that there is no such reason and necessity for an universal infallible judge, as they pretend. Now their great objection is this, If every man may judge for himself, there will be nothing but confusion in religion, there will be no end of controversies; so that an universal infallible judge is necessary, and without this God had not made sufficient provision for the assurance of mens faith, and for the peace and unity of his church; or, as it is expressed in the canon law, *aliter Dominus non videretur fuisse discretus, otherwise our LORD had not seem'd to be discreet.* How plausible soever this objection may appear, I do not despair, if men will but lay aside prejudice and impartially consider things, to make it abundantly evident, that this ground is not sufficient to found an infallible judge upon. And therefore, in answer to it, I desire these following particulars may be considered.

First, that this which they say, rather proves what God should have done according to their fancy, than what he hath really and actually done. My text expressly bids christians to try the spirits, which to any man's sense does imply, that they may judge of these matters: but the church of Rome says they may not; because if this liberty were permitted, God had not ordered things wisely, and for the best, for the peace and unity of his church. But, as the apostle says in another case, *What art thou, O man, that objectest against God?*

Secondly, if this reasoning be good, we may as well conclude that there is an universal infallible judge set over the whole world in all temporal matters, to whose authority all mankind is bound to submit. Because this is as necessary to the peace of the world, as the other is to the peace of the church. And men surely are every whit as apt to be obstinate and perverse about matters of temporal right, as about matters of faith. But it is evident in fact and experience that there is no such universal judge appointed by God over the whole world, to decide all cases of temporal right; and for want of him the world is fain to shift as well as it can. But now a very acute and scholastical man, that would argue that God must needs have

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done whatever he fancies convenient for the world should be done, might by the very same way of reasoning conclude the necessity of an universal infallible judge in civil matters, as well as in matters of religion: and their *alter Dominus non videretur fuisse discretus, otherwise God had not seem'd to be discreet*, is every whit as cogent and as civil, in the one case as the other.

Thirdly, there is no need of such a judge, to assure men in matters of religion; because men may be sufficiently certain without him. I hope it may be certain and clear enough, that there is a GOD; and that his providence governs the world; and that there is another life after this, though neither pope nor council had ever declared any thing about these matters. And for revealed doctrines, we may be certain enough of all that is necessary, if it be true which the fathers tell us, *that all things necessary are plainly revealed in the holy scriptures*.

Fourthly, an infallible judge, if there were one, is no certain way to end controversies, and to preserve the unity of the church; unless it were likewise infallibly certain, that there is such a judge, and who he is. For 'till men were sure of both these, there would still be a controversy whether there be an infallible judge, and who he is. And if it be true which they tell us, *that without an infallible judge controversies cannot be ended*, then a controversy concerning an infallible judge can never be ended. And there are two controversies actually on foot about an infallible judge; one, *whether there be an infallible judge, or not?* which is a controversy between us and the church of Rome: and the other, *who this infallible judge is?* which is a controversy among themselves, which could never yet be decided: and yet 'till it be decided, infallibility, if they had it, would be of no use to them for the ending of controversies.

Fifthly, there is no such absolute need, as is pretended, of determining all controversies in religion. If men would divest themselves of prejudice and interest, as they ought, in matters of religion, the necessary things of religion are plain enough, and men would generally agree well enough about them: but if men will suffer themselves to be

biased by these, they would not hearken to an infallible judge, if there were one ; or they would find out some way or other to call his infallibility into question. And as for doubtful and lesser matters in religion, charity, and mutual forbearance among christians, would make the church as peaceable and happy, as perhaps it was ever designed to be in this world, without absolute unity in opinion.

Sixthly and lastly, whatever may be the inconveniences of mens judging for themselves in religion, yet, taking this principle with the cautions I have given, I doubt not to make it appear, that the inconveniences are far the least on that side. The present condition of humane nature doth not admit of any constitution of things, whether in religion, or civil matters, which is free from all kind of exception and inconvenience : that is the best state of things which is liable to the least and fewest. If men be modest, and humble, and willing to learn, God hath done that which is sufficient for the assurance of our faith and for the peace of his church, without an infallible judge : and if men will not be so, I cannot tell what would be sufficient. I am sure there were heresies and schisms in the apostles times, when those who governed the church were certainly guided by an infallible spirit. God hath appointed guides and teachers for us in matters of religion, and if we will be contented to be instructed by them in those necessary articles and duties of religion which are plainly contained in scripture ; and to be counselled and directed by them in things that are more doubtful and difficult, I do not see why we might not do well enough without any infallible judge or guide.

But still it will be said, *who shall judge what things are plain, and what doubtful ?* The answer to this in my opinion, is not difficult. For if there be any thing plain in religion, every man that hath been duly instructed in the principles of religion can judge of it, or else it is not plain. But there are some things in religion so very plain that no guide or judge can in reason claim that authority over men, as to oblige them to believe or do the contrary no, though he pretend to infallibility ; no, though he were an apostle, though he were an angel from heaven.

St. Paul puts the case so high, Gal. i. 8. *Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than what you have received, let him be accursed:* which plainly supposeth that christians may and can judge when doctrines are contrary to the gospel. What? not believe an apostle, nor an angel from heaven, if he should teach any thing evidently contrary to the plain doctrine of the gospel? If he should determine virtue to be vice, and vice to be virtue? no; not an apostle, nor an angel; because such a doctrine as this would confound and overturn all things in religion. And yet Bellarmine puts this very case, and says, if the pope should so determine, we were bound to believe him, unless we would sin against conscience.

I will conclude this discourse by putting a very plain and familiar case; by which it will appear what credit and authority is fit to be given to a guide, and what not. Suppose I came a stranger into England, and landing at Dover took a guide there to conduct me in my way to York, which I knew before by the map to lie north of Dover: having committed myself to him, if he lead me for two or three days together out of any plain road, and many times over hedge and ditch, I cannot but think it strange, that in a civil and well-inhabited country there should be no highways from one part of it to another: yet thus far I submit to him, though not without some regret and impatience. But then if after this, for two or three days more he lead me directly south, and with my face full upon the sun at noon-day, and at last bring me back again to Dover Peer, and still bids me follow him; then certainly no modesty does oblige a man not to dispute with his guide, and to tell him surely that can be no way, because it is sea. Now though he set never so bold a face upon the matter, and tell me with all the gravity and authority in the world, that it is not the sea but dry land under the species and appearance of water; and that whatever my eyes tell me, having once committed myself to his guidance, I must not trust my own senses in the case; being one of the most dangerous sorts of infidelity for a man to believe his own eyes rather than his faithful and

infallible guide: all this moves me not; but I begin to expostulate roundly with him, and to let him understand that if I must not believe what I see, he is like to be of no farther use to me; because I shall not be able, at this rate, to know whether I have a guide, and whether I follow him or not. In short, I tell him plainly, that when I took him for my guide, I did not take him to tell me the difference between north and south, between a hedge and a highway, between sea and dry land; all this I knew before, as well as he or any man else could tell me; but I took him to conduct and direct me the nearest way to York. And therefore after all his impertinent talk, after all his motives of credibility to persuade me to believe him, and all his confident sayings, which he gravely calls demonstrations, I stand stily upon the shore, and leave my learned and reverend guide to take his own course, and to dispose of himself as he pleaseth; but firmly resolve not to follow him. And is any man to be blamed that breaks with his guide upon these Terms?

And this is truly the case, when a man commits himself to the guidance of any person or church: if by virtue of this authority they will needs persuade me out of my senses, and not to believe what I see, but what they say, that virtue is vice, and vice virtue, if they declare them to be so: and that, because they say they are infallible, I am to receive all their dictates for oracles, tho' never so evidently false and absurd in the judgment of all mankind, in this case there is no way to be rid of these unreasonable people, but to desire of them, since one kindness deserves another, and all contradictions are alike easy to be believed, that they would be pleased to believe that infidelity is faith, and that when I absolutely renounce their authority, I do yield a most perfect submission and obedience to it.

Upon the whole matter, all the revelations of God as well as the laws of men, go upon this presumption that men are not stark fools; but that they will consider their interest, and have some regard to the great concernment of their eternal salvation. And this is as much to secure men from mistake in matters of belief, as God

hath afforded to keep men from sin in matters of practice. He hath made no effectual and infallible provision that men shall not sin; and yet it would puzzle any man to give a good reason, why God should take more care to secure men against errors in belief, than against sin and wickedness in their lives.

I shall now only draw three or four Inferences from this discourse which I have made, and so conclude.

1. That it is every man's duty, who hath ability and capacity for it, to endeavour to understand the grounds of his religion. For to try doctrines, is to inquire into the grounds and reasons of them; which the better any man understands, the more firmly he will be established in the truth, and be the more resolute in the day of trial, and the better able to withstand the arts and assaults of cunning adversaries, and the fierce storms of persecution. And on the contrary, that man will soon be moved from his steadfastness who never examined the grounds and reasons of his belief. When it comes to the trial, he that hath but little to say for his religion, will probably neither do nor suffer much for it.

2. That all doctrines are vehemently to be suspected which decline trial, and are so loth to be brought into the light; which will not endure a fair examination, but magisterially require an implicate faith: whereas truth is bold and full of courage, and loves to appear openly; and is so secure and confident of her own strength as to offer herself to the severest trial and examination. But to deny all liberty of enquiry and judgment in matters of religion, is the greatest injury and disparagement to truth that can be, and a tacit acknowledgment that she lies under some disadvantage, and that there is less to be said for her than for error.

I have often wonder'd why the people in the church of Rome do not suspect their teachers and guides to have some ill design upon them, when they do so industriously debbar them of the means of knowledge, and are so very loth to let them understand what it is that we have to say against their religion. For can any thing in the world be more suspicious, than to persuade men to put out their

eyes, upon promise that they will help them to a much better and more faithful guide? If any church, any profession of men, be unwilling their doctrines should be exposed to trial, it is a certain sign they know something by them that is faulty, and which will not endure the light. This is the account which our SAVIOUR gives us in a like case, it was *because mens deeds were evil, that they loved darkness rather than light. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd: but he that doth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in GOD.*

3. Since reason and christianity allow this liberty to private persons to judge for themselves in matters of religion, we should use this privilege with much modesty and humility, with great submission and deference to our spiritual rulers and guides, whom GOD hath appointed in his church. And there is very great need of this caution, since by experience we find this liberty so much abused by many to the nourishing of pride and self-conceit, of division and faction; and those who are least able to judge, to be frequently the most forward and confident, the most peremptory and perverse: and instead of demeaning themselves with the submission of learners, to assume to themselves the authority of judges, even in the most doubtful and disputable matters.

The tyranny of the Roman church over the minds and consciences of men, is not to be justified upon any account; but nothing puts so plausible a colour upon it, as the ill use that is too frequently made of this natural privilege of mens judging for themselves in a matter of so infinite concernment, as that of their eternal happiness. But then it is to be consider'd, that the proper remedy in this case, is not to deprive men of this privilege, but to use the best means to prevent the abuse of it. For though the inconveniences arising from the ill use of it may be very great, yet the mischief on the other hand is intolerable. Religion itself is liable to be abused to very bad purposes, and frequently is so; but it is not therefore best that there should be no religion: and yet this objection, if it be of

any force and be pursued home, is every whit as strong against religion itself, as against mens liberty of judging in matters of religion. Nay I add further, that no man can judiciously embrace the true religion, unless he be permitted to judge, whether that which he embraces be the true religion or not.

4. When upon due trial and examination we are well settled and establish'd in our religion, *let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*; and not be like children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, through the slight of men, and the cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive. And above all, let us resolve to live according to the excellent rules and precepts of our holy religion; let us heartily obey that doctrine which we profess to believe. We, who enjoy the protestant religion, have all the means and advantages of understanding the will of God, free liberty and full scope of inquiring into it; and informing ourselves concerning it: we have all the opportunities we can wish of coming to the knowledge of our duty: the oracles of God lie open to us, and his law is continually before our eyes; *his word is nigh unto us in our mouths, and in our hearts*; (that is, we may read it and meditate upon it) *that we may do it*: the key of knowledge is put into our hands, so that if we do not enter into the kingdom of heaven, it is we ourselves that shut ourselves out. And where there is nothing to hinder us from the knowledge of our duty, there certainly nothing can excuse us from the practice of it. For the end of all knowledge is to direct men in their duty, and effectually to engage them to the performance of it: the great business of religion is, to make men truly good, and to teach them to live well. And, if religion have not this effect, it matters not of what church any man lists and enters himself; for most certainly, a bad man can be saved in none. Tho' a man know the right way to heaven never so well, and be engaged into it, yet if he will not walk therein, he shall never come thither: nay, it will be an aggravation of this man's unhappiness, that he was lost in the way to heaven, and perish'd in the very road to salvation. But if we will in good

good earnest apply ourselves to the practice of religion, and the obedience of God's holy laws, his grace will never be wanting to us to so good a purpose.

I have not time to recommend Religion to you at large, with all its advantages. I will comprise what I have to say in a few words, and mind them at your peril. Let that which is our great concernment be our great care, to *know the truth and to do it, to fear God and keep his commandments.* Considering the reasonableness and the reward of piety and virtue, nothing can be wiser; considering the mighty assistance of God's grace, which he is ready to afford us, and the unspeakable satisfaction and delight which is to be had in the doing of our duty, nothing can be easier: nothing will give us that pleasure while we live; nothing can minister that true and solid comfort to us, when we come to die: there is probably no such way for a man to be happy in this world; to be sure, there is no way but this to escape the intolerable and endless miseries of another world.

Now God grant that we may all know and do in this our day, the things that belong to our peace, for his mercies sake in JESUS CHRIST: to whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory now and forever, Amen.

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To the right worshipful, and my honoured friend,

JOSEPH REEVE, Esq;

High-Sheriff of the County of

S U R R E Y.

S I R,

*W*HEN I had performed the service which you were pleased to call me to in the preaching of this sermon, I had no thoughts of making it more publick; and yet in this also I was the more easily induced to comply with your desire, because of the suitableness of the argument to the age in which we live; wherein as men have run into the wildest extremities in other things, so particularly in the matter of oaths; some making conscience of taking any oaths at all, and too many none at all of breaking them,

To

EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To convince the great mistake of the one extreme, and to check the growing evil and mischief of the other, is the chief design of this discourse. To which I shall be very glad if, by GOD's blessing, it may prove any ways serviceable I am,

S I R,

Your very faithful and

humble Servant,

JO. TILLOTSON

S E R M O N XXII.

The lawfulness and obligation of oaths.

H E B. vi, 16.

An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

THE necessity of religion to the support of humane society, in nothing appears more evidently than in this, that the obligation of an oath, which is so necessary for the maintainance of peace and justice among men, depends wholly upon the sense and belief of a deity. For no reason can be imagined why any man that doth not believe a GOD, should make the least conscience of an oath, which is nothing else but a solemn appeal to GOD as a witness of the truth of what we say. So that whoever promotes atheism and infidelity, doth the most destructive thing imaginable to humane society, because he takes away the reverence and obligation of oaths: and whenever that is generally cast off, humane society must disband, and all things run into disorder. The just sense whereof made David cry out to GOD with so much earnestness, as if the world had been cracking, and the frame of it ready to break in pieces, Psal. xii. *Help, LORD, for the righteous man ceaseth, and the faithful fail from among the children of men:* intimating, that when faith fails from among men, nothing but a particular and immediate interposition of the divine providence can preserve the world from falling into confusion. And our blessed SAVIOUR gives this as a sign of the end of the world, and the approaching dissolution of all things, when faith and truth shall hardly be found among men, Luke xviii. *When the SON of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?* This state of things doth loudly call for his coming to destroy the world, which is even ready to dissolve

and fall in pieces of itself, when these bands and pillars of humane society do break and fail. And surely never in any age was this sign of the coming of the SON of man more glaring and terrible than in this degenerate age wherein we live, when almost all sorts of men seem to have broke loose from all obligations to faith and truth.

And therefore I do not know any argument more proper and useful to be treated of upon this occasion than of the nature and obligation of an oath, which is the utmost security that one man can give to another of the truth of what he says; the strongest tie of fidelity, the surest ground of judicial proceedings, and the most firm and sacred bond that can be laid upon all that are concerned in the administration of publick justice; upon judge, and jury, and witnesses.

And for this reason I have pitched upon these words: in which the apostle declares to us the great use and necessity of oaths among men; *an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.* He had said before, that for our greater assurance and comfort GOD hath confirmed his promises to us by an oath; condescending herein to deal with us after the manner of men, who when they would give credit to a doubtful matter, confirm what they say by an oath. And generally when any doubt or controversy ariseth between parties concerning a matter of fact, one side affirming and the other denying, an end is put to this contest by an oath; *An oath for confirmation being to them an end of all strife:* An oath for confirmation, *ἐἰς βεβαίωσιν*, for the greater assurance and establishment of a thing: not that an oath is always a certain and infallible decision of things according to truth and right, but that this is the utmost credit that we can give to any thing, and the last effort of truth and confidence among men: after this we can go no farther, for if the religion of an oath will not oblige men to speak truth, nothing will. This is the utmost security that men can give, and must therefore be the final decision of all contests; *An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.*

Now from this assertion of the apostle concerning the great use and end of oaths among men, I shall take occasion

1. To consider the nature of an oath, and the kinds of it.
 2. To shew the great use and even necessity of oaths, in many cases.
 3. To vindicate the lawfulness of them where they are necessary.
 4. To shew the sacred obligation of an oath.
- I shall be as brief in these as the just handling of them will bear.

I. For the nature of an oath, and the kinds of it. An oath is an invocation of God, or an appeal to him as a witness of the truth of what we say. So that an oath is a sacred thing, as being an act of religion and an invocation of the name of God: and this, whether the name of God be expressly mentioned in it or not. If a man only say, I swear, or I take my oath, that a thing is, or is not, so or so; or that I will, or will not, do such a thing: or if a man answer upon his oath, being adjured and required so to do: or if a man swear by heaven, or by earth, or by any other thing that hath relation to God; in all these cases a man doth virtually call God to witness; and in so doing he doth by consequence invoke him as a judge and an avenger, in case what he swears be not true: and if this be express, the oath is a formal imprecation; but whether it be, or not, a curse upon ourselves is always implied in case of perjury.

There are two sorts of oaths, assertory, and promissory. An assertory oath is when a man affirms or denies upon oath a matter of fact, past, or present: when he swears that a thing was, or is so, or not so. A promissory oath is a promise confirmed by an oath, which always respects something that is future: and if the promise be made directly and immediately to God, then it is called a vow; if to men, an oath. I proceed to the

II. Thing, which is to shew the great use and even necessity of oaths, in many cases; which is so great, that humane society can very hardly, if at all, subsist long without them. Government would many times be very insecure, and for the faithful discharge of offices of great trust, in which the welfare of the publick is nearly concerned, it is not possible to find any security equal to that of an oath;

because the obligation of that reacheth to the most secret and hidden practices of men, and takes hold of them in many cases where the penalty of no humane law can have any awe or force upon them : and especially, it is (as the civil law expresseth it) *maximum expediendarum litium remedium*, the best means of ending controversies. And where mens estates or lives are concerned, no evidence but what is assured by an oath will be thought sufficient to decide the matter, so as to give full and general satisfaction to mankind. For in matters of so great concernment, when men have all the assurance that can be had, and not till then, they are contented to sit down, and rest satisfied with it. And among all nations an oath hath always been thought the only peremptory and satisfactory way of deciding such controversies.

III. The third thing I proposed was, to vindicate the lawfulness of oaths, where they are necessary. And it is a very strong inducement to believe the lawfulness of them, that the unavoidable condition of humane affairs hath made them so necessary. The apostle takes it for granted, that an oath is not only of great use in humane affairs, but in many cases of great necessity, to confirm a doubtful thing, and to put an end to controversies which cannot otherwise be decided to the satisfaction of the Parties contending ; *An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife*. And indeed it is hardly imaginable that God should not have left that lawful, which is so evidently necessary to the peace and security of mankind.

But because there is a sect, sprung up in our memory which hath called in question the lawfulness of all oaths to the great mischief and disturbance of humane society, shall endeavour to search this matter to the bottom, and to manifest how unreasonable and groundless this opinion is. And to this end, I shall,

First, prove the lawfulness of oaths from the authority of this text, and from the reasons plainly contained, or strongly implied in it.

Secondly, I shall shew the weakness and insufficiency of the grounds of the contrary opinion ; whether from reason, or from scripture, which last they principally re-

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upon; and if it could be made out from thence would determine the case.

I. I shall prove the lawfulness of oaths from the authority of this text, and the reasons plainly contained, or strongly implied in it. Because the apostle doth not only speak of the use of oaths among men without any manner of censure and reproof, but as a commendable custom and practice, and in many cases necessary for the confirmation of doubtful matters, and in order to the final decision of controversies and differences among men. For,

First, he speaks of it as the general practice of mankind, to confirm things by an oath in order to the ending of differences. And indeed there is nothing that hath more universally obtained in all ages and nations of the world; than which there is not a more certain indication that a thing is agreeable to the law of nature and the best reason of mankind. And that this was no degenerate practice of mankind, like that of idolatry, is from hence evident; that when God separated a people to himself, it was practised among them, by the holy patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and was afterwards not only allowed, but in many cases commanded by the law of Moses; which, had it been a thing evil in itself, and forbidden by the law of nature, would not have been done.

Secondly, another undeniable argument from the text of the lawfulness of oaths is, that God himself, in condescension to the custom of men who use to confirm and give credit to what they say by an oath, is represented by the apostle as confirming his promise to us by an oath, ver. 13. *When God made the promise to Abraham, because he could swear by none greater, he swears by himself. For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: which he certainly could not have done, had an oath been unlawful in itself. For that had been to comply with men in an evil practice, and by his own example to give countenance to it in the worst manner: but though God condescend to represent*

himself to us after the manner of men, he never does it in any thing that is in its own nature evil and sinful.

Thirdly, from the great usefulness of oaths in humane affairs, to give credit and confirmation to our word, and to put an end to contestations. Now that which serves to such excellent purposes, and is so convenient for humane society, and for mutual security and confidence among men, ought not easily to be presumed unlawful, 'till it be plainly proved to be so. And if we consider the nature of an oath, and every thing belonging to it, there is nothing that hath the least appearance of evil in it. There is surely no evil in it, as it is an act of religion; nor as it is an appeal to God as a witness and avenger in case we swear falsely; nor as it is a confirmation of a doubtful matter; nor as it puts an end to strife and controversy. And these are all the essential ingredients of an oath, and the ends of it; and they are all so good, that they rather commend it, than give the least colour of ground to condemn it. I proceed in the

Second place, to shew the weakness and insufficiency of the grounds of the contrary opinion; whether from reason or from scripture.

First, from reason. They say the necessity of an oath is occasioned by the want of truth and fidelity among men. And that every man ought to demean himself with the faithfulness and integrity as may give credit and confirmation to his word; and then oaths will be needless. This pretence will be fully answered if we consider the two things.

1. That in matters of great importance no other obligation, besides that of an oath, hath been thought sufficient amongst the best and wisest of men, to assert the fidelity to one another. *Even the best of men* (to use the words of a great author) *have not trusted the best without it.* As we see in very remarkable instances where oaths have passed between those who might be thought to have the greatest confidence in one another, as between Abraham and his old faithful servant Eliezer concerning the choice of a wife for his son: between father and son, Jacob and Joseph, concerning the burial

his father in the land of Canaan : between two of the dearest and most intimate friends, David and Jonathan, to assure their friendship to one another ; and it had its effect long after Jonathan's death, in the saving of Mephiboth, when reason of state and the security of his throne seem'd to move David strongly to the contrary ; for it is expressly said, 2 Sam. xxi. 7. that *David spared Mephiboth, Jonathan's son, because of the oath of the LORD that was between them* ; implying, that had it not been for his oath, other considerations might probably have prevail'd with him to have permitted him to have been cut off with the rest of Saul's children.

2. This reason, which is alledged against oaths among men, is much stronger against God's confirming his promises to us by an oath. For he, who is truth itself, is surely of all other most to be credited upon his bare word, and his oath needless to give confirmation to it ; and yet he condescends to add his oath to his word ; and therefore that reason is evidently of no force,

Secondly, from scripture. Our SAVIOUR seems altogether to forbid swearing in any case, Matth. v. 33, 34. *Ye have heard that it hath been said to them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself : but I say unto you, swear not at all ; neither by heaven, &c. but let your communication be yea, yea. and nay, nay ; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.* And this law St. James recites, chap. v. ver. 12. as that which christians ought to have a particular and principal regard to ; *above all things, my brethren, swear not* : and he makes the breach of this law a damning sin, *lest ye fall into condemnation.* But the authority of our SAVIOUR alone is sufficient, and therefore I shall only consider that text.

And, because here lies the main strength of this opinion of the unlawfulness of oaths, it is very fit that this text be fully consider'd ; and that it be made very evident, that it was not our SAVIOUR's meaning by this prohibition wholly to forbid the use of oaths.

But before I enter upon this matter, I will readily grant, that there is scarce any error whatsoever that hath a more plausible colour from scripture, than this ; which makes
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the case of those who are seduced into it the more pitiable; but then it ought to be consider'd, how much this doctrine of the unlawfulness of oaths reflects upon the christian religion: since it is so evidently prejudicial both to humane society in general, and particularly to those persons that entertain it: neither of which ought rashly to be supposed and taken for granted, concerning any law delivered by our SAVIOUR: because upon these terms it will be very hard for us to vindicate the divine wisdom of our SAVIOUR's doctrine, and the reasonableness of the christian religion. Of the inconvenience of this Doctrine to humane society, I have spoken already. But besides this, it is very prejudicial to them that hold it. It renders them suspected to government, and in many cases incapable of the common benefits of justice and other privileges of humane society, and exposeth them to great penalties as the constitution of all laws and governments at present is, and it is not easy to imagine how they should be otherwise. And, which is very considerable in this matter, it sets those who refuse oaths upon very unequal terms with the rest of mankind, if where the estates and lives of men are equally concern'd, their bare testimonies shall be admitted without an oath, and others shall be obliged to speak upon oath: nothing being more certain in experience, than that many men will lye for their interest when they will not be perjured, God having planted in the natural consciences of men a secret dread of perjury above most other sins. And this inconvenience is so great, as to render those who refuse oaths in all cases almost intolerable to humane society. I speak not this either to bring them into trouble, or to persuade them to measure truth by their interest: but on the other hand I must needs say, that it is no argument either of a wise or good man to take up any opinion, especially such a one as is greatly to his prejudice, upon slight grounds. And this very consideration, that it is so much to their inconvenience, may justly move them to be very careful in the examination of it.

This being premis'd, I come now to explain this prohibition of our SAVIOUR; and to this purpose, I desire these three things may be well consider'd,

First, that several circumstances of these words of our SAVIOUR do manifestly shew that they ought to be interpreted in a limited sense, as only forbidding swearing in common conversation; needless and heedless oaths (as one expresseth it) and in general all voluntary swearing, unless upon some great and weighty cause, in which the glory of God and the good of the souls of men is concerned. For that in such cases a voluntary oath may be lawful, I am induced to believe from the example of St. Paul, who useth it more than once upon such occasions; of which I shall hereafter give particular Instances.

And this was the sense of wise men among the heathen, that men should not swear but upon necessity and great occasion. Thus Eusebius, the philosopher in Stobæus, counsels men. *Some (says he) advise men to be careful to swear the truth; but I advise principally that men do not easily swear at all*, that is, not upon any slight but only upon weighty occasions: to the same purpose Epictetus, *shun oaths wholly, if it be possible; if not, however as much as thou canst*: and so likewise Simplicius in his comment upon him, *We ought wholly to shun swearing, except upon occasions of great necessity*. And Quintilian among the Romans. *In totum jurare, nisi ubi necesse est, gravi viro arum convenit; to swear at all, except where it is necessary, does not well suit with a wise man*.

And that this prohibition of our SAVIOUR's ought to be understood of oaths in ordinary conversation, appears from the opposition which our SAVIOUR makes, *Swear not at all; but let your communication be yea, yea*; that is, in your ordinary commerce and affairs do not interpose oaths, but say and do. And this is very much confirmed, in that our SAVIOUR does not under this general prohibition interpose any exception in such oaths as are expressly by the name of God: the reason whereof is this; the jews thought it unlawful in ordinary communication to swear expressly by the name of God, but lawful to swear by the creatures, as by heaven and earth, &c. So that our SAVIOUR's meaning was as if he had said, *You think you may swear in common conversation, provided you do not swear by the name of God; but I say unto you, let your communication be with-*

out

out oaths of any kind: you shall not so much as swear by heaven or by earth, because GOD is virtually invoked in every oath. And unless we suppose this to be our SAVIOUR's meaning, I do not see what good reason can be given why our SAVIOUR should only forbid them to swear by the creatures, and not much rather by the name of GOD; such oaths being surely of all others most to be avoided, as being the most direct abuse and profanation of the name of GOD.

Secondly, it is very considerable to the explaining of this prohibition, that there are the like general expressions in the other jewish authors concerning this very matter, which yet must of necessity be thus limited. Maimonides, from the ancient rabbies, gives this rule, that *it is best not to swear at all*. And Philo useth almost the same words. And Rabbi Jonathan comes very near our SAVIOUR's expression, when he says, *the just man will not swear at all; not so much as by the common names of GOD, nor by his attributes, nor by his works, as by heaven, or the angels, or by the law*. Now it is not imaginable, that these learned jews should condemn oaths in all cases, when the law of Moses did in many cases expressly require them. And therefore they are to be understood of voluntary oaths in ordinary conversation. And that the jews meant this by not swearing at all, seems to be very plain from a passage in Josephus, who says that the sect of the Essenes forbade their disciples to swear at all; and yet he tells us at the same time, that they who were admitted into that sect took an oath to observe the laws and rules of it. So that they who forbade to swear at all, allowed of oaths imposed by the authority of superiors.

Thirdly, which will peremptorily decide this matter, this prohibition of our SAVIOUR's cannot be understood to forbid all oaths, without a plain contradiction to the undoubted practice of the primitive christians, and of the apostles, and even of our LORD himself. Origen and Tertullian tell us, that the christians refused to swear to the emperor's genius; not because it was an oath, but because they thought it to be idolatrous; but the same Tertullian says, that the christians were willing to swear

pro salutem imperatoris, by the health and safety of the
emperor. Athanasius being accused to Constantius, purged
 himself by oath, and desired that his accuser might be
 put to his oath *sub attestacione veritatis, by calling the*
truth to witness; by which form (says he) *we christians*
are wont to swear. But which is more than this, St. Paul,
 upon weighty occasions, does several times in his epistles
 call GOD to witness for the truth of what he says; which
 is the very formality of an oath. *God is my witness, Rom.*
9. As God is true, our word was not yea and nay, 2 Cor.
18. and ver. 23. I call God for a record upon my soul.
before God I lye not, Gal. i. 20. God is my record, Phil.
1. 8. God is my witness, 1 Thess. ii. 5. These are all
 unquestionable oaths; which we cannot imagine St. Paul
 could have used, had they been directly contrary to our
 SAVIOUR'S law. And whereas some defend this upon
 account of his extraordinary inspiration, I cannot possibly
 show how this mends the matter. For certainly it is very
 convenient to say, that they who were to teach the pre-
 cepts of CHRIST to others, did themselves break them by
 inspiration.

But I go yet further, and shall urge an example beyond
 exception.

Our SAVIOUR himself (who surely would not be the
 example of breaking his own laws) did not refuse to
 answer upon oath, being called thereto at his trial. So
 find Matth. xxvi. 63. *The high priest said unto him, I*
charge thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether
thou be the CHRIST the SON of GOD; that is, he re-
quired him to answer this question upon oath. For among
 jews, the form of giving an oath to witnesses and
 others was not by tending a formal oath to them, as
 our custom is among us, but by adjuring them, that is,
 inspiring them to answer upon oath: as is plain from
 Mat. v. 1. *If a man hear the voice of swearing, and is a*
witness, whether he hath seen or known of such a thing,
he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity. If he
 heard the voice of swearing, that is, if being ad-
 dressed or demanded to answer upon oath concerning what
 he hath seen or heard, he do not utter the truth, he is
 perjured.

perjured. Now to this adjuration of the high priest our SAVIOUR answered, *thou hast said*: which words are not an avoiding to answer (as some have thought) but a direct answer, as if he had said, *it is as thou sayest, it is even so, I am the SON of GOD*. For upon this answer the high priest said, *he hath spoken blasphemy*. But to put the matter beyond all doubt, St. Mark tells us, Mark xiv, 61. that he being asked by the high priest, *Art thou CHRIST the SON of the BLESSED?* he answered, *I am*. So that unless we will interpret our SAVIOUR's doctrine contrary to his own practice, we cannot understand him to forbid all oaths, and consequently they are not unlawful.

I have been the longer upon this, that I might give clear satisfaction in this matter to those that are willing to receive it.

As for the ceremonies in use among us in the taking of oaths, it is no just exception against them, that they are not found in scripture. For this was always matter of liberty; and several nations have used several rites and ceremonies in their oaths. It was the custom of the Grecians, to swear laying their hands upon the altar, *quod sanctissimum jusjurandum est habitum*, (saith A. Gellius) which was looked upon as the most sacred form of swearing. The Romans were wont *Jovem lapidem jurare*; that is, he that swore by Jupiter held a flint stone in his hand, and flung it violently from him with these words *Si sciens fallo, ita me Jupiter bonis omnibus ejiciat, ut e bunc lapidem*: If I knowingly falsify, GOD so throw out of all my possessions as I do this stone.

In scripture there are two ceremonies mentioned of swearing. One, of putting the hand under the thigh of him to whom the oath was made. Thus Elias swore to Abraham, Gen. xxiv. and Joseph and Jacob to each other, Gen. xlvii. The other was by lifting up the hand to heaven: Thus Abraham expresseth the manner of his oath, Gen. xiv. 22. *I have lift up my hand to the high GOD*. And thus GOD, condescending to the manner of men, expresseth himself, Deut. xxxii. 40. *If I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear*. In allusion to

custom the psalmist describes the perjured person, Psal. cxliv. 8. *whose mouth speaketh vanity; and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* And there is not the least intimation in scripture that either of these ceremonies were prescribed and appointed by God, but voluntarily instituted and taken up by men. And thus among us the ceremony of swearing is by laying the hand on the holy gospel, and kissing the book; which is both very solemn and significant. And this is the reason why this solemn kind of oath is called a corporal oath, and was antiently so called; because the sign or ceremony of it is performed by some part of the body. And this solemnity is an aggravation of the perjury, because it makes it both more deliberate, and more scandalous.

I shall speak but briefly to the

IV. And last particular, viz. the sacred obligation of an oath: because it is a solemn appeal to God as a witness of the truth of what we say: to God, I say, from whose piercing and all-seeing eye, from whose perfect and infinite knowledge nothing is or can be hid; so that there is not a thought in our heart but he sees it, nor a word in our tongue but he discerns the truth or falsehood of it. Whenever we swear, we appeal to his knowledge, and offer ourselves to his just judgment who is the powerful patron and protector of right, and the almighty judge and avenger of all falsehood and unrighteousness. So that it is not possible for men to lay a more sacred and solemn obligation upon their consciences, than by the religion of an oath. Moses very well expresseth it by binding our souls with a bond, Numb. xxx. 2. *If a man swear an oath, to bind his soul with a bond;* intimating that he that swears lays the strongest obligation upon himself, and puts his soul in pawn for the truth of what he says. And this obligation no man can violate, but at the utmost peril of the judgment and vengeance of God. For every oath implies a curse upon ourselves in case of perjury, as Plutarch observes. And this was always the case of mankind concerning the obligation of oaths. *Nullum vinculum ad astringendam fidem majores nostri jurando arctius esse voluerunt,* saith Tully; *Our forefathers had*

no stricter bond whereby to oblige the faith of men to one another, than that of an oath. To the same purpose is that of the comedian, *Aliud si seirem, quo firmare meam apud vos possem fidem, sanctius quam iusjurandum, id pollicerer tibi.* If I knew any thing more sacred than an oath, whereby to confirm to you the truth of what I say, I would make use of it.

I will crave your patience a little longer, whilst by way of inference from this discourse, I represent to you the great sin of swearing in common conversation, upon trivial and needless occasions, and the heinousness of the sin of perjury.

I. First, the great sin of swearing upon trivial and needless occasions, in common conversation. Because an oath is a solemn thing, and reserved for great occasions, to give confirmation to our word in some weighty matter, and to put an end to controversies which cannot otherwise be peremptorily and satisfactorily decided. And therefore to use oaths upon light occasions argues great profaneness and irreverence of almighty God. So Ulpian the great Roman lawyer observes, *Nonnullos esse faciles ad jurandum contemptu religionis*; that mens proneness to swearing comes from a contempt of religion; than which nothing disposeth men more to atheism and infidelity. Besides that it doth many times surprise men unawares into perjury: and how can it be otherwise, when men use to interlard all their careless talk with oaths, but that they must often be perjured? And which is worse, it prepares men for deliberate perjury; for with those who are accustomed to swear upon light occasions, an oath will go off with them more roundly about weightier matters. From a common custom of swearing (saith Hierocles) men easily slide into perjury: therefore (says he) if thou wouldst not be perjured, do not use to swear. And this perhaps is the meaning of St. James, when he cautions christians so vehemently against common swearing, *ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὀρκισμὸν αἵσιτε*, (for so some of the best ancient copies read it) lest ye fall into hypocrisy, that is, lest ye lye and be perjured, by using yourselves to rash and inconsiderate swearing.

And men expose themselves to this danger to no purpose; oaths in common discourse being so far from confirming a man's word, that with wise men they much weaken it: for common swearing (if it have any serious meaning at all) argues in a man a perpetual distrust of his own reputation, and is an acknowledgment that he thinks his bare word not to be worthy of credit. And it is so far from adorning and filling a man's discourse, that it makes it look swollen and bloated, and more bold and blustering, than becomes persons of gentle and good breeding. Besides that it is a great incivility, because it highly offends and grates upon all sober and considerate persons; who cannot be presumed with any manner of ease and patience to hear God affronted, and his great and glorious name so irreverently tost upon every slight occasion.

And it is no excuse to men that many times they do it ignorantly, and not observing and knowing what they do. For certainly it is no extenuation of a fault, that a man hath got the habit of it so perfect that he commits it when he does not think of it. Which consideration should make men oppose the beginnings of this vice, lest it grow into a habit very hard to be left. *Nemo novit, nisi qui expertus est, quàm sit difficile consuetudinem jurandi extirpare*, saith St. Austin; *no man knows, but he that hath tried, how hard it is to get rid of this custom of swearing*: but yet it is certain men may do it, by resolution and great use of themselves: for he that can choose whether he will speak or not, can choose whether he will swear or not when he speaks. *Major consuetudo majorem intentionem flagitat*; the more inveterate a custom is, the greater care should be used to break ourselves of it.

In short, this practice is so contrary to so plain a precept of our SAVIOUR, and by the breach whereof we incur so great a danger (as St. James assures us) that it must be a great charity that can find out a way to reconcile a common custom of swearing with a serious belief of the christian religion: which I would to God those who are concerned would seriously lay to heart; especially, since this sin, of all others, hath the least of temptation to it. Profit or pleasure there is none in it, nor

any thing in mens natural tempers to incite them to it. For tho' some men pour out oaths so freely, as if they came naturally from them, yet surely no man is born of a swearing constitution.

All that can be pretended for it, is custom and fashion: but to shew that this is no excuse, it is very observable that it is particularly in the matter of oaths and perjury that the HOLY GHOST gives that caution, *Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.*

And lastly, it deserves to be considered, that this sin is so much the greater because of the frequent returns of it in those that are accustomed to it. So that altho' it were but small in itself (as it is not) yet the frequent practice of this sin would quickly mount it up to a great score.

2. Secondly, to represent the heinousness of the sin of perjury. But before I aggravate this crime, it is fit to let men know how many ways they may be guilty of it.

1st, When a man asserts upon oath what he knows to be otherwise: or promiseth what he does not intend to perform. In both these cases the very act of swearing is perjury. And so likewise when a man promiseth upon oath to do that which is unlawful for him to do, because this oath is contrary to a former obligation.

2dly, When a man is uncertain whether what he swears to, be true. This likewise is perjury, in the act; though not of the same degree of guilt with the former, because it is not so fully and directly against his knowledge and conscience. For men ought to be certain of the truth of what they assert upon oath, and not to swear at a venture. And therefore no man ought positively to swear to the truth of any thing but what he himself hath seen or heard: this being the highest assurance men are capable of in this world. In like manner, he is guilty of perjury in the same degree, who promiseth upon oath what he is not morally and reasonably certain he shall be able to perform.

3dly, They are likewise guilty of perjury, who do not use great plainness and simplicity in oaths; but answer equivocally and doubtfully, or with reservation of some thing in their minds, thinking thereby to save the truth.

of what they say. And we all know who they are that make use of these arts, and maintain them to be lawful; to the infinite scandal of the christian religion and prejudice of humane society, by doing what in them lies to destroy all faith and mutual confidence among men. For what can be a greater affront to God, than to use his name to deceive men? And what can more directly overthrow the great end and use of oaths, which are for confirmation, and to put an end to strife? whereas by these arts the thing is left in the same uncertainty it was before, and there is no decision of it. For there is hardly any form of words can be devised so plain, as not to be liable to equivocation: to be sure a man when he swears may always reserve something in his mind which will quite alter the sense of whatever he can say or promise upon oath. And this may be laid down for a certain rule, that all departure from the simplicity of an oath is a degree of perjury, and a man is never a whit the less forsworn because his perjury is a little finer and more artificial than ordinary. And though men think by this device to save themselves harmless from the guilt of so great a sin, they do really increase it, by adding to their iniquity the impudent folly of mocking God and deceiving themselves.

And whereas it is pleaded in the favour of mental reservation, that the whole proposition, as made up of what is exprest in words, and of that which is reserved in the mind, is true; for instance, if a man being ask'd upon oath whether he be a priest, shall answer he is not, reserving in his mind that he is not a priest of Bacchus, or some such thing, the whole proposition is true, and then they say a man may swear to that which is true, without danger of perjury: this is of no force, because, though the whole proposition be true, it is deceitful, and contrary to that sincerity which ought to be in an oath: and the end of an oath is hereby likewise defeated, which is to ascertain the truth of what we say: but if a man reserve something in his mind which alters the truth of what he says, the thing is still as doubtful and uncertain as it was before. Besides, if this be a good reason, a

man may swear with reservation in all cases ; because the reason equally extends to all cases ; for if the truth of the proposition, as made up of what is express'd in words and reserv'd in the mind, will excuse a man from perjury, then no man can be perjurd that swears with reservation ; but this the casuists of the Roman church do not allow, but only in some particular cases, as before an incompetent judge, or the like ; for they see well enough that if this were allow'd in all cases, it would destroy all faith among men. And therefore since the reason extends alike to all cases, it is plain that it is to be allow'd in none.

4thly, He is guilty of perjury after the act, who having a real intention when he swears, to perform what he promiseth, yet afterwards neglects to do it : not for want of power (for so long as that continues the obligation ceaseth) but for want of will, and due regard to his oath.

Now that perjury is a most heinous sin, is evident, because it is contrary to so plain and great a law of God ; one of the ten words or precepts of the moral law, *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy GOD in vain* ; thou shalt not bring or apply the name of GOD to a falsehood : or, as Josephus renders it, *Thou shalt not adjure GOD to a false thing* : which our SAVIOUR renders yet more plainly, Matth. v. 33. *Thou shalt not forswear thyself*. For he seems to refer to the third commandment when he says, *Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself*, as he had done before to the 6th and 7th, when he says, *It was said to them of old time, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery*. So that the primary, if not the sole intention of this Law, *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy GOD in vain*, is to forbid the great sin of perjury. And I do not remember that in scripture the phrase of taking GOD's name in vain, is used in any other sense. And thus it is certainly used, Prov. xxx. 9. *Left I be poor and steal, and take the name of the LORD thy GOD in vain* i.e. lest poverty should tempt me to steal, and stealing should engage me in perjury. For among the Jews an oath was tendered to him that was suspected of theft, as appears from Levit. vi. 2. where it is said, *If any one be*

guilty

guilty of theft, and lyeth concerning it, or sweareth falsely; he shall restore all that about which he hath sworn falsely. *Lest I steal, and take the name of the LORD my GOD in vain*; that is, be perjured, being examined upon oath concerning a thing stoln. And for this reason the thief and the perjured person are put together, Zech. v. 4. where it is said, that *a curse shall enter into the house of the thief, and of him that sweareth falsely by the name of GOD*. From all which it is very probable, that the whole intention of the third commandment is to forbid this great sin of perjury. To deter men from which, a severe threatening is there added; *for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*; that is, he will most severely punish such a one. And 'tis very observable, that there is no threatening added to any other commandment, but to this and the second, intimating to us that, next to idolatry and the worship of a false God, perjury is one of the greatest affronts that can be offered to the divine majesty. This is one of those sins that cries so loud to heaven, and quickens the pace of GOD's judgments, Mal. iii. 9. *I will come near to you in judgment, and be a swift witness against the swearer*: for this GOD threatens utter destruction to the man and his house, Zech. v. 4. *speaking of the curse that goeth over the face of the whole earth*; GOD (says he) *will bring it forth, and it shall enter into the house of him that sweareth falsely by the name of GOD, and shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof. It shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it*. This sin by the secret judgment of GOD undermines states and families to the utter ruin of them. And among the heathen it was always reckoned one of the greatest crimes, and which they did believe GOD did not only punish upon the guilty person himself, but upon his family and posterity; and many times upon whole nations, as the prophet also tells us, that *because of oaths the land mourns*.

I need not use many words to aggravate this sin; it is certainly a crime of the highest nature. Deliberate perjury being directly against a man's knowledge, so that no man

man can commit it without staring his conscience in the face; which is one of the greatest aggravations of any crime. And it is equally a sin against both tables; being the highest affront to God, and of most injurious consequence to men. It is an horrible abuse of the name of God, an open contempt of his judgment, and an insolent defiance of his vengeance: and in respect of men, it is not only a wrong to this or that particular person who suffers by it, but treason against humane society; subverting at once the foundations of publick peace and justice, and the private security of every man's life and fortune. It is a defeating of the best and last way that the wisdom of men could devise for the decision of doubtful matters, Solomon very fully and elegantly expresseth the destructive nature of this sin, Prov. xxv. 18. *A false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow*; intimating, that amongst all the instruments of ruine and mischief that have been devised by mankind, none is of more pernicious consequence to humane society than perjury, and breach of faith. It is a pestilence that usually walketh in darkness, and a secret stab and blow, against which, many times, there is no possibility of defence.

And therefore it highly concerns those who upon these and the like occasions are called upon their oath, whether as jurors or witnesses, to set God before their eyes, and to have his fear in their hearts whenever they come to take an oath. And to govern and discharge their consciences in this matter by known and approved rules, and by the resolutions of pious and wise men, and not by the loose reasonings and resolutions of pamphlets, sent abroad to serve the turns of unpeaceable and ill-minded men (whether atheists, or papists, or others) on purpose to debauch the consciences of men by teaching them to play fast and loose with oaths. And it is a very sad sign of the decay of christian religion among us, to see so many who call themselves christians, to make so little conscience of so great a sin, as even the light of nature would blush and tremble at,

I will conclude all with those excellent sayings of the son of Sirach concerning these two sins (I have been speaking of) profane swearing and perjury, Eccl. xxiii. 9, 10, &c. *Accustom not thy mouth to swearing; neither use thyself to the naming of the holy one. A man that useth much swearing shall be filled with iniquity, and the plague shall never depart from his house. If he shall offend, his sin shall be upon him; and if he acknowledge not his sin, he maketh a double offence. And if he swear falsely, he shall not be innocent, but his house shall be full of calamities.* And to represent to us the dreadful nature of this sin of perjury, *There is (saith he) a word that is clothed about with death, meaning a rash and false oath; There is a word that is clothed about with death. God grant it be not found in the heritage of Jacob: for all such things shall be far from the godly; and they will not swallow in these sins.* From which God preserve all good men, and make them careful to preserve themselves; as they value the present peace of their own consciences, and the favour of almighty God in this world and the other, for his mercies like in **JESUS CHRIST, To whom, &c.**

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S E R M O N

Preached at the

F U N E R A L

Of the Reverend

Mr. *THOMAS GOUGE*,

the 4th of *November*, 1681.

At St. ANNE'S BLACK-FRIERS;

With a brief account of his LIFE.

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To the right worshipful the

P R E S I D E N T,

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T R E A S U R E R,

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The rest of the worthy G O V E R -
N O R S of the hospital of *Christ-*
Church in *London*.

*W*HEN upon the request of some
of the relations and friends of
the reverend Mr. G O U G E, deceased,
and to speak the truth, in compliance

VOL. II.

G

with

EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

*with mine own inclination to do right in
to the memory of so good a man, and bum
to set so great an example in the view to t
of all men, I had determined to make good
this discourse publick; I knew not I
where more fitly to address it than to frien
yourselves who are the living pattern with
of the same virtue, and the faithful two
dispensers and managers of one of the chang
best and greatest charities in the world and
especially since he had a particular pital
relation to you, and was pleased for steen
some years last past, without any other ful a
consideration, but that of charity, a ric
employ his constant pains in catechising iron
the poor children of your hospital good,
wisely considering of how great conse city
quence it was to this city, to have beref
the foundations of religion well laid both
the tender years of so many person numb
as were afterwards to be planted there*

EPIS TLE DEDICATORY.

*in several professions; and from a true
humility of mind, being ready to stoop
to the meanest office and service to do
good.*

*I have heard from an intimate
friend of his, that he would sometimes
with great pleasure say, that he had
two livings which he would not ex-
change for two of the greatest in Eng-
land, meaning Wales and Christ's hos-
pital: contrary to common account he
esteemed every advantage of being use-
ful and serviceable to GOD and men
a rich benefice, and those his best pa-
trons and benefactors, not who did him
good, but who gave him the opportu-
nity and means of doing it. To you
therefore as his patrons this sermon
both of right belong, and to you I
humbly dedicate it; heartily beseeching
G 2 almighty*

EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

*almighty GOD, to raise up many by his
example that may serve their genera-
tion according to the will of GOD, as
he did. I am*

Your faithful

and humble Servant,

JO. TILLOTSON

S E R M O N XXIII.

Preached at the funeral of Mr. *Thomas Gouge*: With a short account of his life.

LUKE xx. 37, 38.

New that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the LORD the GOD of Abraham, and the GOD of Isaac, and the GOD of Jacob. For he is not a GOD of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him.

THE occasion of these words of our blessed SAVIOUR was an objection which the sadducees made against the resurrection, grounded upon a case which had sometimes happened among them, of a woman that had seven brethren successively to her husbands. Upon which case they put this question to our SAVIOUR; *whose wife of the seven shall this woman be at the resurrection?* that is, if men live in another world, how shall the controversy between these seven brethren be decided? for they all seem to have an equal claim to this woman, each of them having had her to wife.

This captious question was not easy to be answered by the pharisees, who fancied the enjoyments of the next life to be of the same kind with the sensual pleasures of this world, only greater and more durable. From which tradition of the jews concerning a sensual paradise, Mahomet seems to have taken the pattern of his: as he did likewise many other things from the jewish traditions. Now upon this supposition, that in the next life there will be marrying and giving in marriage, it was a question not easily satisfied, *whose wife of the seven this woman should be?*

But our SAVIOUR clearly avoids the whole force of it, by shewing the different state of men in this world, and in the other. *The children of this world* (says he) *marry, and are given in marriage; but they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* And he does not barely and magisterially assert this doctrine, but gives a plain and substantial reason for it; because they cannot die any more. After men have lived a while in this world they are taken away by death, and therefore marriage is necessary to maintain a succession of mankind; but in the other world men shall become immortal and live for ever, and then the reason of marriage will wholly cease: for when men can die no more, there will then be no need of any new supplies of mankind.

Our SAVIOUR having thus cleared himself of this objection by taking away the ground and foundation of it, he produceth an argument for the proof of the resurrection, in the words of my text; *Now that the dead are raised, Moses even shewed at the bush, when he calleth the LORD the GOD of Abraham, the GOD of Isaac, and the GOD of Jacob.* That is, when in one of his books GOD is brought in speaking to him out of the bush, and calling himself by the title of the GOD of Abraham, the GOD of Isaac, and the GOD of Jacob. From whence our SAVIOUR infers the resurrection, because GOD is not the GOD of the dead, but of the living: for all live to him.

My design from these words is, to shew the force and strength of this argument which our SAVIOUR urges for the proof of the resurrection. In order whereunto I shall,

First, consider it as an argument *ad hominem*, and shew the fitness and force of it to convince those with whom our SAVIOUR disputed.

Secondly, I shall inquire, whether it be more than an argument *ad hominem*. And if it be, wherein the reason and absolute force of it doth consist?

And then, I shall apply this doctrine of the resurrection to the present occasion.

I. First, we will consider it as an argument *ad hominem*, and shew the fitness and force of it to convince those with whom our SAVIOUR disputed. And this will appear if we carefully consider these four things.

1. What our SAVIOUR intended directly and immediately to prove by this argument.

2. The extraordinary veneration which the jews in general had for the writings of Moses above any other books of the old testament.

3. The peculiar notion which the jews had concerning the use of this phrase or expression of God's being any one's GOD.

4. The great respect which the jews had for these three fathers of their nation, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For each of these make our SAVIOUR's argument more forcible against those with whom he disputed.

First, we will consider what our SAVIOUR intended directly and immediately to prove by this argument. And that was this, that there is another state after this life, wherein men shall be happy or miserable according as they have lived in this world. And this doth not only suppose the immortality of the soul, but forasmuch as the body is an essential part of man, doth by consequence infer the resurrection of the body; because otherwise the man would not be happy or miserable in the other world. But I cannot see any sufficient ground to believe that our SAVIOUR intended by this argument directly and immediately to prove the resurrection of the body, but only by consequence, and as it follows from the admission of a future state wherein men shall be rewarded or punished. For that reason of our SAVIOUR, that *GOD is not a GOD of the dead, but of the living*, if it did directly prove the resurrection of the body, it would prove that the bodies of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were raised to life again, at or before that time when GOD spake to Moses and called himself the GOD of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: but we do not believe this; and therefore ought not to suppose that it was the intention of our SAVIOUR directly and immediately to prove the resurrection of the body, but only (as I said before) a future state. And that this was all

^all our SAVIOUR intended will more plainly appear, if we consider what that error of the sadducees was which our SAVIOUR here confutes. And Josephus, who very well understood the difference of the sects among the jews, and gives a particular account of them, makes not the least mention of any controversy between the pharisees and the sadducees about the resurrection of the body. All that he says, is this, that the pharisees hold the immortality of the soul, and that there are rewards and punishments in another world : but the sadducees denied all this, and that there was any other state after this life. And this is the very same account with that which is given of them in the new testament, ver. 27. of this chapter. *The Sadducees who deny that there is any resurrection.* The meaning of which is more fully declared, Acts xxiii. 8. *The sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit ; but the pharisees confess both.* That is, the sadducees denied that there was any other state of men after this life, and that there was any such thing as an immortal spirit, either angels, or the souls of men surviving their bodies. And, as Dr. Hammond hath judiciously observed this is the true importance of the word *ἀνάστασις*, viz. a future or another state ; unless in such texts where the context doth restrain it to the raising again of the body, or where some word that denotes the body, as *σώματ' or σαρκός*, is added to it.

Secondly, the force of this argument against those with whom our SAVIOUR disputed will farther appear, if we consider the great veneration which the jews in general had for the writings of Moses above any other books of the old testament ; which they (especially the sadducees) looked upon only as explications and comments upon the law of Moses : But they esteemed nothing as a necessary article of faith which had not some foundation in the writings of Moses. And this seems to me to be the true reason why our SAVIOUR chose to confute them out of Moses, rather than any other part of the old testament and not, as many learned men have imagined, because the sadducees did not receive any part of the old testament but only the five books of Moses ; so that it was in vain

to argue against them out of any other. This I know hath been a general opinion, grounded I think upon the mistake of a passage in Josephus, who says the sadducees only receive the written law. But if we carefully consider that passage, we shall find that Josephus doth not there oppose the law to the other books of the old testament, which were also written; but to oral tradition. For he says expressly, that *the sadducees only receive the written law, but the pharisees, over and besides what was written, receive the oral which they call tradition.*

I deny not but that in the later prophets there are more express texts for the proof of a future state, than any are to be found in the books of Moses. As Daniel xii. 2. *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* And indeed it seems very plain that holy men among the jews, towards the expiration of the legal dispensation, had still clearer and more express apprehensions concerning a future state than are to be met with in the writings of Moses, or of any of the prophets.

The law given by Moses did suppose the immortality of the souls of men, and the expectation of another life after this, as principles of religion in some degree naturally known; but made no new and express revelation of these things. Nor was there any occasion for it, the law of Moses being a political law, not intended for the government of mankind, but of one particular nation; and therefore was establish'd, as political laws are, upon temporal promises and threatnings; promising temporal prosperity to the observation of its precepts, and threatening the breach of them with temporal judgments and calamities.

And this I take to be the true reason why arguments fetch'd from another world are so obscurely insisted upon under that dispensation; not but that another life after this was always suppos'd, and was undoubtedly the hope and expectation of good men under the law, but the clear discovery of it was reserv'd for the times of the MESSIAS. And therefore as those times drew on, and the SUN of righteousness was near his rising, the shadows of the night began

began to be chased away, and mens apprehensions of a future state to clear up; so that in the time of the Maccabees good men spake with more confidence and assurance of these things.

It is likewise to be considered, that the temporal calamities and sufferings with which the jews were almost continually harass'd from the time of their captivity, had very much wean'd good men from the consideration of temporal promises, and awaken'd their minds to the more serious thoughts of another world. It being natural to men when they are destitute of present comfort, to support themselves with the expectation of better things for the future, and as the apostle to the Hebrews expresseth it, chap. vi. ver. 18. *to fly for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is before them*, and to employ their reason to fortify themselves as well as they can in that persuasion.

And this I doubt not was the true occasion of those clearer and riper apprehensions of good men concerning a future state, in those times of distress and persecution: it being very agreeable to the wisdom and goodness of the divine providence not to leave his people destitute of sufficient support under great trials and sufferings; and nothing but the hopes of a better life could have born up the spirits of men under such cruel tortures. And of this we have a most remarkable instance in the history of the seven brethren in the Maccabees; who being cruelly tortured and put to death by Antiochus, do most expressly declare their confident expectation of a resurrection to a better life. To which history the apostle certainly refers, Heb. xi. 35. when he says, *others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection*; where the word, which we render were tortur'd, is *ἐρτυπασθησαν*, which is the very word used in the Maccabees to express the particular kind of torture used upon them; besides that being offered deliverance they most resolutely refused to accept of it, with this express declaration that they hoped for a resurrection to a better life.

But to return to my purpose, notwithstanding there might be more clear and express texts to this purpose in the ancient prophets, yet our SAVIOUR knowing how

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great a regard not only the sadducees, but all the jews had to the authority of Moses, he thought fit to bring his proof of the resurrection out of his writings, as that which was the most likely to convince them.

Thirdly, if we consider farther the peculiar notion which the jews had concerning the use of this phrase or expression of GOD's being any one's GOD. And that was this. That GOD is no where in scripture said to be any one's GOD while he was alive. And therefore they tell us that while Isaac lived, GOD is not called the GOD of Isaac, but the fear of Isaac. As Gen. xxxi. 42. *Except the GOD of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had been with me;* and ver. 53. when Laban made a covenant with Jacob, 'tis said that *Laban did swear by the GOD of Abraham, and the GOD of Nabor, and the GOD of their fathers, but Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac.* I will not warrant this observation to be good, because I certainly know it is not true. For GOD doth expressly call himself the GOD of Isaac, while Isaac was yet alive, Gen. xxviii. 13. *I am the LORD GOD of Abraham thy father, and the GOD of Isaac.* It is sufficient to my purpose, that this was a notion anciently current among the jews. And therefore our SAVIOUR's argument from this expression must be so much the stronger against them: for if the souls of men be extinguished by death (as the sadducees believed) what did it signify to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to have GOD called their GOD after they were dead? but surely, for GOD to be any one's GOD, doth signify some great benefit and advantage; which yet (according to the notion which the jews had of this phrase) could not respect this life, because, according to them, GOD is not said to be any one's GOD 'till after he is dead: but it is thus said of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob after their death, and therefore our SAVIOUR infers very strongly against them, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not extinguished by death, but do still live somewhere: for *GOD is not the GOD of the dead, but of the living.* And then he adds by way of farther explication, *for all live to him.* That is, though these good men who are departed this life, do not still live

live to us, here in this world, yet *they live to God*, and are with him.

Fourthly, if we consider the great respect which the jews had for those three fathers of their nation, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They had an extraordinary opinion of them, and esteemed nothing too great to be thought or said of them. And therefore we find that they looked upon it as a great arrogance for any man to assume any thing to himself that might seem to set him above Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. With what indignation did they fly upon our SAVIOUR on this account? John iv. 12. *Art thou greater than our father Jacob?* and chap. viii. ver. 53. *Art thou greater than our father Abraham? whom makest thou thyself?* Now they who had so superstitious a veneration for them, would easily believe any thing of privilege to belong to them: so that our SAVIOUR doth with great advantage instance in them, in favour of whom they would be inclined to extend the meaning of any promise to the utmost, and allow it to signify as much as the words could possibly bear. So that it is no wonder that the text tells us that this argument put the sadducees to silence. They durst not attempt a thing so odious, as to go about to take away any thing of privilege from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And thus I have, as briefly as the matter would bear, endeavoured to shew the fitness and force of this argument to convince those with whom our SAVIOUR disputed. Come now, in the

II. Second place, to inquire, whether this be any more than an argument *ad hominem*; and if it be, wherein the real and absolute force of it doth consist?

I do not think it necessary to believe that every argument used by our SAVIOUR or his apostles, is absolutely and in itself conclusive of the matter in debate. For an argument which doth not really prove the thing in question, may yet be a very good argument *ad hominem*; and in some cases more convincing to him with whom we dispute than that which is a better argument in itself. Now it is possible, that our SAVIOUR's intention might

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not be to bring a conclusive proof of the resurrection, but only to confute those who would needs be disputing with him. And to that purpose an argument *ad hominem*, which proceeded upon grounds which they themselves could not deny, might be very proper and effectual. But although it be not necessary to believe, that this was more than an argument *ad hominem*; yet it is the better to us, if it be absolutely and in itself conclusive of the thing in question. And this I hope will sufficiently appear, if we consider these four things.

1. That for GOD to be any one's GOD doth signify some very extraordinary blessing and happiness to those persons of whom this is said.
2. If we consider the eminent faith and obedience of the persons to whom this promise is made.
3. Their condition in this world.
4. The general importance of this promise, abstracting from the persons particularly specified and named in it, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

First, if we consider that for GOD to be any one's GOD doth signify some very extraordinary blessing and happiness to those persons of whom this is said. It is a big word for GOD to declare himself to be any one's GOD: and the least we can imagine to be meant by it, is that GOD will in an extraordinary manner employ his power and wisdom to do him good: that he will concern himself more for the happiness of those whose GOD he declares himself to be, than for others.

Secondly, if we consider the eminent faith and obedience of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham left his country in obedience to GOD, not knowing whither he was to go. And which is one of the most unparallel'd and strange instances of faith and obedience that can almost be imagined, he was willing to have sacrificed his only son at the command of GOD. Isaac and Jacob were very good men, and devout worshippers of the true GOD, when almost the whole world was sunk into idolatry and all manner of impiety. Now what can we imagine, but that the good GOD did design some extraordinary reward to such faithful servants of his? especially

if we consider, that he intended this gracious declaration of his concerning them, for a standing encouragement to all those who in after ages should follow the faith and tread in the steps of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Thirdly, if we consider the condition of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in this world. The scripture tells us, that *they were pilgrims and strangers upon the earth*; had no fixed and settled habitation, but were forced to wander from one kingdom and country to another; that they were exposed to many hazards and difficulties, to great troubles and afflictions in this world; so that there was no such peculiar happiness befall them in this life above the common rate of men, as may seem to fill up the big words of this promise, that *G O D would be their G O D*. For so far as the scripture-history informs us, and farther we cannot know of this matter, Esau was as prosperous as Jacob; and Jacob had a great many more troubles and afflictions in this life than Esau had. But surely when *G O D* calls himself the *G O D* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, this signifies that *G O D* intended some very peculiar blessing and advantage to them above others: which seeing they did not enjoy in this world, it is very reasonable to believe that one time or other this gracious declaration and promise of *G O D* was made good to them.

And therefore the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. xi. from this very expression of *G O D*'s being said to be the *G O D* of Abraham and others, argues that some extraordinary happiness was reserved for them in another world, and that upon this very ground I am now speaking of, namely, because the condition of Abraham and some others, was not such in this world as might seem to answer the fulness of this promise. *All these* (says he) *died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.* From whence he reasons very strongly that these good men might reasonably expect something better than any thing that had befallen them in this world. *For they* (says he) *that say such things*

declare plainly that they seek a country; which at the 16th verse he calls a better country, that is a heavenly. They that say such things: that is, they who acknowledge themselves to be strangers and pilgrims in the earth, and yet pretend that GOD had promised to be their GOD, declare plainly that they expect some reward beyond this life. From all which he concludes, *Wherefore GOD is not ashamed to be called their GOD, because he hath prepared for them a city*; intimating that if no happiness had remained for these good men in another world, this promise of GOD's being their GOD, would shamefully have fallen short of what it seemed to import, viz. some extraordinary reward and blessing worthy of GOD to bestow: something more certain and lasting than any of the enjoyments of this world; which since GOD hath abundantly performed to them in the happiness of another life, his promise to them was made good to the full, and he needed not be ashamed to be called their GOD. But if nothing beyond this life had been reserved for them, that saying of old Jacob towards the conclusion of his life, *few and evil have the days of the years of my life been*, would have been an eternal reflection upon the truth and faithfulness of him who had so often called himself the GOD of Jacob.

But now, because to all this it may be said, that this promise seems to have been made good to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in this world: for was not GOD the GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when he took such a particular and extraordinary care of them, and protected them from the manifold dangers they were exposed to by such a special and immediate providence, *suffering no one to do them harm, but rebuking even kings for their sake*? Was not he Abraham's GOD when he blest him so miraculously with a son in his old age, and with so considerable an estate to leave to him? was not that saying of Jacob a great acknowledgment of the gracious providence of GOD towards him, *With my staff passed I over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands*? and though it needs must be a very cutting affliction to him to lose his son Joseph, as he thought he had done, yet that was more

than recompensed to him in Joseph's strange advancement in Egypt, whereby G O D put into his hands the opportunity of saving his father and his whole family alive. And was not G O D the G O D of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in making them fathers of so numerous an offspring, as afterwards became a great nation : and in giving them a fruitful land ; and bringing them to the quiet possession of it by such a series of wonderful miracles ? what need then is there of extending this promise to another world ? doth it not seem abundantly made good in those great blessings which G O D bestowed upon them whilst they lived, and afterwards upon their posterity, in this world ? And does not this agree well enough with the first and most obvious sense of these words, *I am the G O D of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, that is, I am he that was their G O D while they were alive, and am still the G O D of their posterity for their sakes ; I say, because the three former considerations are liable to this objection, which seems wholly to take off the force of this argument ; therefore for the full clearing of this matter, I will add one consideration more.

Fourthly then, we will consider the general importance of this promise, abstracting from the particular persons specified and named in it, viz. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; and that is, that G O D will make a wide and plain difference between good and bad men ; he will be so the G O D of good men as he is not of the wicked : and some time or other put every good man into a better and happier condition than any wicked man : so that the general importance of this promise is finally resolved into the equity and justice of the divine providence.

And unless we suppose another life after this, it will certainly be very hard, and I think impossible, to reconcile the history of the old testament, and the common appearances of things in this world, with the justice and goodness of G O D's providence.

It cannot be denied, but that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and several good men in the old testament, had many signal testimonies of the divine favour vouchsafed to them in this world ; but we read likewise of several wicked

men that had as large a share of temporal blessings. It is very true that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had great estates, and were petty princes : but Pharaoh was a mighty prince in comparison of them ; and the kingdom of Egypt, which probably was the first and chief seat of Idolatry, was at the same time one of the most potent and flourishing kingdoms in the world : and was blest with a prodigious plenty, whereby they were furnished with store of corn when good Jacob and his family had like to have perished by famine. 'Tis true, Joseph was advanced to great power in Egypt, and thereby had the opportunity of saving his father's house, by settling and feeding them in Egypt : but then it is to be considered again, that this cost them very dear, and their coming thither was the occasion of a long and cruel bondage to Jacob's posterity, so that we see that these good men had no such blessings, but what were common with them to many others that were wicked : and the blessings which God bestowed upon them, had great abatements by the intermixture of many and sore afflictions.

It seems then upon the whole matter, to be very plain, that the Providences of God in this world towards good men are so contrived, that it may sufficiently appear, to those who wisely consider the works of God, that they are not neglected by him ; and yet that these outward blessings are so promiscuously dispensed, that no man can certainly be concluded to be a good man from any happiness he enjoys in this life : and the prosperity of good men is usually on purpose so shadowed and mixed with afflictions, as may justly raise their hopes to the expectation of a more perfect happiness and better reward than any they meet with in this world.

And if so, then the general importance of this promise, that God will be the God of good men, must necessarily signify something beyond this world : because in this world there is not that clear difference universally made between good and bad men which the justice of the divine providence doth require, and which seems to be intended, in the general sense of this promise. For if this promise (though personally made to Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob) be intended, as the scripture tells us it was for a standing encouragement to good men in all ages, then it must contain in it this general truth, *that God will some time or other plentifully reward every good man*; that is, he will do something far better for him than for any wicked man: but if there be no life after this, it is impossible to reconcile this sense of it with the course of God's providence, and with the history of the bible.

And to make this out fully, and at once, I will only produce that single instance of Abel and Cain. *Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and he had this testimony, that he pleased God*; which was in effect to declare, that God was the God of Abel, and not of Cain; so that by virtue of the general importance of this promise, it might justly be expected that Abel's condition should have been much better than Cain's: but if there be no happiness after this life, Abel's was evidently much worse. For upon this very account, that he pleased God better, he was killed by Cain, who had offered to God a slight and contemptuous offering. And Cain lived a long time after, and grew great, and built cities. Now supposing there were no other life after this, this must have been a most horrible example to all ages, from the beginning of the world to the end of it, and have made men for ever afraid to please God upon such hard terms; when they were sure of no other reward for so doing, but to be oppress'd and slain by the hands of the wicked. So that if this were really the case, it would puzzle all the wit and reason of mankind to vindicate the equity and justice of the divine providence, and to rescue it out of the hands of this terrible objection.

And thus have I, as briefly as I could, endeavour'd to clear to you the force of this argument used by our SAVIOUR for the proof of the resurrection. And have the longer insisted upon it, because at first appearance it seems to be but a very obscure and remote argument: and yet so much the more necessary to be cleared, because this in all probability was that very text upon which the Jews in our SAVIOUR's time grounded their belief of a future state, in opposition to the error of the Sadducees.

and which they call'd by way of eminency *the promise made of GOD unto the fathers.* As will plainly appear, if we consider what St. Paul says to this purpose; when he appeals so often to the Pharisees for his agreement with them in this article of the resurrection, and likewise in the ground of it from *the promise made of GOD unto the fathers.* Acts xxiv. 14, 15. *But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the GOD of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets; and have hope towards GOD, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead.* From whence it is clear, that they both grounded their hope of the resurrection upon something written in the law and the prophets: and what that was, he expresseth more particular, chap. xxvi. ver. 6, 7. *And now I stand, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of GOD unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving GOD day and night, hope to come.* By the promise made of GOD unto the fathers, he means some promise made by GOD to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for so St. Luke more than once, in his history of the Acts, explains this phrase of the GOD of their fathers, Acts iii. 13. *The GOD of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the GOD of our fathers;* and chap. vii. ver. 32. *I am the GOD of thy fathers, the GOD of Abraham, and the GOD of Isaac, and the GOD of Jacob.* Now what was the great and famous promise which GOD made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? was it not this of being their GOD. So that it was this very promise upon which St. Paul tells us the Jews grounded their hope of a future state, because they understood it necessarily to signify some blessing and happiness beyond this life.

And now having, I hope, sufficiently clear'd this matter, I shall make some improvement of this doctrine of a future state, and that to these three purposes.

1. To raise our minds above this world and the enjoyments of this present life. Were but men thoroughly convinced of this plain and certain truth, that there is a vast difference between time and eternity, between a few years

years and everlasting ages: would we but represent to ourselves what thoughts and apprehensions dying persons have of this world; how vain and empty a thing it appears to them, how like a pageant and a shadow it looks as it passeth away from them, methinks none of these things could be a sufficient temptation to any man to forget God and his soul; but, notwithstanding all the delights and pleasures of sense, we should be strangely intent upon the concernments of another world, and almost wholly taken up with the thoughts of that vast eternity which we are ready to launch into. For what is there in this world, this waste and howling wilderness, this rude and barbarous country which we are but to pass through, which should detain our affections here, and take off our thoughts from our everlasting habitation; from that better and that heavenly country, where we hope to live and be happy for ever?

If we settle our affections upon the enjoyments of this present life, so as to be extremely pleas'd and transported with them, and to say in our hearts, it is good for us to be here; if we be excessively griev'd or discontented for the want or loss of them, and if we look upon our present state in this world any otherwise than as a preparation and passage to a better life, it is a sign that our faith and hope of the happiness of another life is but very weak and faint, and that we do not heartily and in good earnest believe what we pretend to do concerning these things. For did we stedfastly believe and were thoroughly perswaded of what our religion so plainly declares to us concerning the unspeakable and endless happiness of good men in another world, our affections would sit more loose to this world, and our hopes would raise our hearts as much above these present and sensible things as the heavens are high above the earth; we should value nothing here below, but as it serves for our present support and passage, or may be made a means to secure and increase our future felicity.

2. The consideration of another life should quicken our preparation for that blessed state which remains for us in the other world. This life is a state of probation

and trial. This world is **GOD's** school, where immortal spirits clothed with flesh are trained and bred up for eternity. And then certainly it is not an indifferent thing and a matter of slight concernment to us, how we live and demean ourselves in this world: whether we indulge ourselves in ungodliness and worldly lusts, or live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world: no, it is a matter of infinite moment, as much as our souls and all eternity are worth. Let us not deceive ourselves; *for as we sow, so shall we reap: if we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption; but if we sow to the spirit, we shall of the spirit reap everlasting life. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. The righteous hath hopes in his death. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*

But the ungodly are not so: whoever hath lived a wicked and vicious life, feels strange throws and pangs in his conscience when he comes to be cast upon a sick bed. *The wicked is like the troubled sea* (saith the prophet) *when it cannot rest*; full of trouble and confusion, especially in a dying hour. It is death to such a man to look back upon his life, and a hell to him to think of eternity. When his guilty and trembling soul is ready to leave his body, and just stepping into the other world, what horror and amazement do then seize upon him? what a rage doth such a man feel in his breast, when he seriously considers, that he hath been so great a fool as for the false and imperfect pleasure of a few days to make himself miserable for ever.

3. Let the consideration of that unspeakable reward which **GOD** hath promised to good men at the resurrection, encourage us to obedience and a holy life. We serve a great prince who is able to promote us to honour; a most gracious master who will not let the least service we do for him pass unrewarded. This is the inference which the apostle makes from his large discourse of the doctrine of the resurrection, **1 Cor. xv. 58.** *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the LORD, forasmuch as ye know that,*

that your labour shall not be in vain in the LORD. Nothing will make death more welcome to us, than a constant course of service and obedience to GOD. Sleep (saith Solomon) is sweet to the labouring man: so after a great diligence and industry in working out our own salvation, and (as it is said of David) serving our generation according to the will of GOD, how pleasant will it be to fall asleep? And as an useful and well-spent life will make our death to be sweet, so our resurrection to be glorious. Whatever acts of piety we do to GOD, or of charity to men; whatever we lay out upon the poor and afflicted and necessitous, will all be considered by GOD in the day of recompences, and most plentifully rewarded to us.

And surely no consideration ought to be more prevalent to persuade us to alms-deeds and charity to the poor, than that of a resurrection to another life. Besides the promises of this life which are made to works of charity, and there is not any grace or virtue whatsoever, which hath so many and so great promises of temporal blessings made to it in scripture as this grace of charity; I say, besides the promises of this life, the great promise of eternal life is in scripture in a more especial manner entailed upon it. Luke xii. 33. Give alms, (saith our SAVIOUR) provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not; and chap. xvi. ver. 9. Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. And 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, &c. that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life; the word *ῥημέλιον*, which our translation renders foundation according to the common use of it, seems in this place to have a more peculiar notion, and to signify the security that is given by a pledge, or by an instrument or obligation of contract for the performance of covenants. For besides that the phrase of laying up in store, or treasur-

up a foundation, seems to be a very odd jumbling of metaphors; this very word *θεμέλιος* almost necessarily requires this notion as it is used by the same apostle, in his second epistle to Timothy, chap. 2. ver. 19. where it is said, *the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, &c.* a seal being very improper to strengthen a foundation, but very fit to confirm a covenant. And then surely it ought to be render'd, *the covenant of God remains firm, having this seal.* And so likewise in the foremention'd text, the sense will be much more easy and current if we render it thus, *treasuring up, or providing for themselves a good security or pledge against the time to come; I add a pledge, because that anciently was the common way of security for things lent: besides that the apostle seems plainly to allude to that passage; Tobit iv. 8, 9. If thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly, &c. for thou layest up a good treasure for thyself against the day of necessity, τίμα γὰρ ἀγαθὸν θησαυρίζεις, for thou treasurest up for thyself a good pledge; to which this of the apostle exactly answers, ἀποθησαυρίζοντες ἑαυτοῖς θεμέλιον καλόν, treasuring up, or providing for themselves a good pledge or security, &c.* the sense however is plain, that the charity of alms is one of the best ways of securing our future happiness.

And yet further to encourage us to abound in works of charity, the scripture tells us that proportionably to the degrees of our charity shall be the degrees of our reward; upon this consideration the apostle exhorts the Corinthians to be liberal in their charity, 2 Cor. ix. 6. *he that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, but he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.* So that whatever we lay out in this kind is to the greatest advantage, and upon the best security; two considerations which use to be very prevalent with rich men to lay out their money.

We certainly do it to the greatest advantage; because God will consider the very smallest thing that any of us do in this kind. He that shall give so much as a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward; these last words, shall not lose his reward, are a *μείωσις*, and signify much more than they

they seem to speak, viz. that he shall have a very great reward, infinitely beyond the value of what he hath done.

And we do it likewise upon the best security; so Solomon assures us, Prov. xix. 17. *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again:* and we may be confident of our security where God is surety; nay, he tells us that in this case he looks upon himself as principal, and that whatever we do in ways of mercy and charity to the poor he takes as done to himself. So our LORD hath told us, Matth. xxv. 40. and we shall hear the same from him again out of his own mouth when he shall appear in his majesty to judge the world, *then the king shall answer and say unto them, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

And on the other side, the scripture no where passeth a more severe doom upon any sort of persons, than upon those who have no bowels of compassion towards their brethren in distress. This is a fearful sentence indeed, which the apostle pronounceth upon such persons, Jam. ii. 13. *He shall have judgment without mercy that hath shewed no mercy.* And this our SAVIOUR represents to us in a most solemn manner, in that lively description which he makes of the judgment of the great day, Matth. xxv. 31. &c. *When the SON of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

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and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat, &c. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal. And if this be, as most certainly it is, a true and proper representation of the process of that day, then the great matter of enquiry will be, what works of charity and mercy have been done or neglected by us, and accordingly a sentence of eternal happiness or misery will be pass'd upon us: I was hungry, did ye feed me, or did ye not? I was naked, did ye clothe me, or did ye not? I was sick and in prison, did ye visit me, or did ye not? Not but that all the good or evil of our lives, in what kind soever, shall then be brought to account; but that our SAVIOUR did choose to instance particularly, and only in things of this nature, should methinks make a mighty impression upon us, and be a powerful consideration to oblige us to have a peculiar regard to works of mercy and charity, and to make sure to abound in this grace; that when we shall appear before the great judge of the world, we may find that mercy from him, which we have shew'd to others, and which we shall all undoubtedly stand in need of in that day.

And among all our acts of charity, those which are done upon least probability and foresight of their meeting with any recompense in this world, either by way of real requital or of fame and reputation, as they are of all other most acceptable to God, so they will certainly have the most ample reward in another world. So our LORD hath assur'd us, and accordingly adviseth us, Luke xiv. 12, 13, 14. *When thou makest a feast, invite not the rich, lest because they will recompense thee again: but call the poor, the lame, the blind, for they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.* If we be religious for worldly ends, and serve God, and do good to men only in contemplation of some temporal advantage, we take up with present payment, and count ourselves short of our future reward: of such, saith the LORD, *verily I say unto you, they have their reward; they are their own security, and have taken care to satisfy themselves, and therefore are to expect nothing from*

GOD. But let us who call ourselves christians do something for GOD, for which we have no hopes to be recompensed in this world; that we may shew that we trust GOD, and take his word, and dare venture upon the security of the next world, and that recompense which shall be made at the resurrection of the just.

And how great and glorious that shall be, our SAVIOUR tells us immediately before my text. *They that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, they can die no more, but they are equal to the angels, and are the children of GOD, being the children of the resurrection.*

If then we be heirs of such glorious hopes, and believe that he who is the GOD of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will also be our GOD: let us live as it becomes the candidates of heaven, and the children of the resurrection, and such as verily believe another life after this, and hope on day to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of GOD.

And now that I have represented to you what encouragement there is to well-doing, and particularly to works of charity, from the consideration of the blessed reward we shall certainly meet with at the resurrection of the just; I shall crave your patience a little longer, while I propose to you one of the fairest examples of this kind which either this, or perhaps any other age, could easily present us withal: I mean our deceased brother to whom we are now paying our last solemn respects, the reverend Mr. THOMAS GOUGE; the worthy son of a reverend and learned divine of this city, Dr. William Gouge; who was minister of this parish of Black-Friers six and forty years; he died in 1653, and still lives in the memory of many here present.

I must confess that I am no friend to funeral pageants, where there is nothing of extraordinary worth or merit in the party commended to give occasion and foundation for them: in such cases, as praises are not due to the dead, so they may be of ill consequence to the living, not only by bringing those of our profession that make practice of it, under the suspicion of officious and mer-

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rary flattery, but likewise by encouraging men to hope that they also may be well spoken of, and even fainted when they are dead, though they should have done little or no good in their life: but yet on the other hand, to commend those excellent persons the virtues of whose lives have been bright and exemplary, is not only a piece of justice due to the dead, but an act of great charity to the living, setting a pattern of well-doing before our eyes, very apt and powerful to incite and encourage us to go and do likewise.

Upon both these considerations, first to do right to the memory of so good a man, and then in hopes that the example may prove fruitful and have a considerable effect upon others to beget the like goodness and charity in them, I shall endeavour, in as narrow a compass as may be, to give you the just character of this truly pious and charitable man, and by setting his life in a true light to recommend with all the advantage I can so excellent a pattern to your imitation.

He was born at Bow near Stratford in the county of Middlesex the 19th day of September 1605. He was bred at Eaton school, and from thence chosen to King's college in Cambridge, being about 20 years of age, in the year 1626. After he had finish'd the course of his studies, and taken his degrees, he left the university and his fellowship, being presented to the living of Colsden near Croyden in Surrey, where he continued about two or three years; and from thence was remov'd to St. Sepulchres in London, in the year 1638, and the year after thinking fit to change his condition match'd into a very worthy and ancient family, marrying one of the daughters of Sir Robert Darcy.

Being thus settled in this large and populous parish, he did with great sollicitude and pains discharge all the parts of a vigilant and faithful minister, for about the space of twenty-four years. For besides his constant and weekly labour of preaching, he was very diligent and charitable in visiting the sick, and ministering not only spiritual counsel and comfort to them, but likewise liberal relief to the wants and necessities of those that were poor and destitute

of means to help themselves in that condition. He did also every morning throughout the year catechise in the church, especially the poorer sort who were generally most ignorant; and to encourage them to come thither to be instructed by him, he did once a week distribute money among them, not upon a certain day, but changing it on purpose as he thought good, that he might thereby oblige them to be constantly present; these were chiefly the more aged poor, who being past labour had leisure enough to attend upon this exercise. As for the other sort of poor who were able to work for their living, he set them at work upon his own charge, buying flax and hemp for them to spin, and what they spun he took off their hands, paying them for their work, and then got it wrought into cloth, and sold it as he could, chiefly among his friends, himself bearing the whole loss. And this was a very wise and well chosen way of charity, and in the good effect of it a much greater charity than if he had given these very persons freely and for nothing so much as they earned by their work; because by this means he took many off from begging, and thereby rescued them at once from two of the most dangerous temptations of this world, idleness and poverty; and by degrees reclaimed them to a virtuous and industrious course of life, which enabled them afterwards to live without being beholden to the charity of others.

And this course so happily devis'd and begun by Mr. Gouge in his own parish was I think that which gave the first hint to that worthy and useful citizen Mr. Thomas Firmin of a much larger design, which hath been prosecuted by him for some years with that vigour and good success in this city, that many hundreds of poor children and others who liv'd idle before, unprofitable both to themselves and the publick, are continually maintained at work, and taught to earn their own livelihood much in the same way: he being, by the generous assistance and charity of many worthy and well-disposed Persons of all ranks, enabled to bear the unavoidable loss and charge of so vast an undertaking; and by his own forward inclination to charity, and his unwearied diligence and activity

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But to return to our deceased friend ; concerning whom I must content myself to pass over many things worthy to be remembred of him, and to speak only of those virtues of his which were more eminent and remarkable.

Of his piety towards God, which is the necessary foundation of all other graces and virtues, I shall only say this, that it was great and exemplary, but yet very still and quiet, without stir and noise, and much more in substance and reality, than in shew and ostentation ; and did not consist in censuring and finding fault with others, but in the due care and government of his own life and actions, and in *exercising himself continually to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men* ; in which he was such a proficient, that even after a long acquaintance and familiar conversation with him, it was not easy to observe any thing that might deserve blame.

He particularly excell'd in the more peculiar virtues of conversation, in modesty, humility, meekness, cheerfulness, and in kindness and charity towards all men.

So great was his modesty, that it never appeared either by word or action, that he put any value upon himself. This I have often observed in him, that the charities which were procured chiefly by his application and industry, when he had occasion to give an account of them, he would rather impute to any one who had but the least hand and part in the obtaining of them, than assume any thing of it to himself. Another instance of his modesty was, that when he had quitted his living of St. Sepulchre's upon some dissatisfaction about the terms of conformity, he willingly forbore preaching, saying there was no need of him here in London where there were so many worthy ministers, and that he thought he might do as much or more good in another way which could give no offence. Only in the latter years of his life, being better satisfied of some things he had doubted of before, he had licence from some of the bishops to preach in Wales in his professorships ; which he was the more willing to do, because in some places he saw great need of it, and he thought he

might do it with greater advantage among the poor people, who were the more likely to regard his instructions, being recommended by his great charity so well known to them, and of which they had so long had the experience and benefit. But where there was no such need, he was very well contented to hear others persuade men to goodness, and to practise it himself.

He was clothed with humility, and had in a most eminent degree that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit (which St. Peter says) *is in the sight of God of so great price*: so that there was not the least appearance either of pride or passion in any of his words or actions. He was not only free from anger and bitterness, but from all affected gravity and moroseness. His conversation was affable and pleasant; he had a wonderful serenity of mind and evenness of temper, visible in his very countenance; he was hardly ever merry, but never melancholy or sad; and for any thing I could discern, after a long and intimate acquaintance with him, he was upon all occasions and accidents perpetually the same; always cheerful and always kind; of a disposition ready to embrace and oblige all men; allowing others to differ from him, even in opinions that were very dear to him; and provided men did but fear God and work righteousness, he lov'd them heartily, how distant soever from him in judgment about things less necessary; in all which he is very worthy to be a pattern for men of all persuasions whatsoever.

But that virtue which of all other shone brightest in him, and was his most proper and peculiar character, was his cheerful and unwearied diligence in acts of pious charity. In this he left far behind him all that ever I knew, and, as I said before, had a singular sagacity and prudence in devising the most effectual ways of doing good, and in managing and disposing his charity to the best purposes, and to the greatest extent; always, if it were possible, making it to serve some end of piety and religion; as the instructions of poor children in the principles of religion, and furnishing grown persons that were ignorant with the bible and other good books; strictly obliging those to whom he gave them to a diligent reading of them, and

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In his occasional alms to the poor, in which he was very free and bountiful, the relief he gave them was always mingled with good counsel, and as great a tenderness and compassion for their souls as bodies; which very often attained the good effect it was likely to have, the one making way for the other with so much advantage, and men being very apt to follow the good advice of those, who gave them in hand so sensible a pledge and testimony of their good-will to them.

This kind of charity must needs be very expensive to him, but he had a plentiful estate settled upon him, and left him by his father, and he laid it out as liberally in the most prudent and effectual ways of charity he could think of, and upon such persons as, all circumstances considered, he judged to be the fittest and most proper objects of it.

For about nine or ten years last past he did, as is well known to many here present, almost wholly apply his charity to Wales, because there he judged was most occasion for it: And because this was a very great work, he did not only lay out upon it whatever he could spare out of his own estate, but employ'd his whole time and pains to excite and engage the charity of others for his assistance in it.

And in this he had two excellent designs. One, to have poor children brought up to read and write, and to be carefully instructed in the principles of religion: the other, to furnish persons of grown age, the poor especially, with the necessary helps and means of knowledge, as the bible, and other books of piety and devotion, in their own language; to which end he procured the church catechism, the practice of piety, and that best of books the whole duty of man, besides several other pious and useful treatises, some of them to be translated into the Welch tongue, and great numbers of all of them to be printed, and sent down to the chief towns in Wales, to be sold at easy rates to those that were able to buy them, and to be freely given to those that were not.

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And in both these designs, through the blessing of God upon his unwearied endeavours, he found very great success. For by the large and bountiful contributions which chiefly by his industry and prudent application were obtained from charitable persons of all ranks and conditions, from the nobility and gentry of Wales and the neighbouring counties, and several of that quality in and about London; from divers of the right reverend bishops, and of the clergy; and from that perpetual fountain of charity the city of London, led on and encouraged by the most bountiful example of the right honourable the lord mayor and the court of aldermen; to all which he constantly added two thirds of his own estate, which as I have been credibly informed was two hundred pounds a year; I say, by all these together there were every year eight hundred, sometimes a thousand poor children educated as I said before; and by this example several of the most considerable towns of Wales were excited to bring up at their own charge the like number of poor children in the like manner, and under his inspection and care.

He likewise gave very great numbers of the books above mentioned both in the Welch and English tongues to the poorer sort, so many as were unable to buy them and willing to read them. But which was the greatest work of all, and amounted indeed to a mighty charge, he procured a new and very fair impression of the bible and liturgy of the church of England in the Welch tongue (the former impression being spent, and hardly twenty of them to be had in all London) to the number of eight thousand; one thousand whereof were freely given to the poor, and the rest sent to the principal cities and towns of Wales to be sold to the rich at very reasonable and low rates, viz. at four shillings apiece well bound and clasped which was much cheaper than any English Bible was ever sold that was of so fair a print and paper: a work of that charge, that it was not likely to have been done any other way; and for which this age, and perhaps the next, will have great cause to thank God on his behalf,

In these good works he employed all his time and care and pains, and his whole heart was in them; so that he was very little affected with any thing else, and seldom either minded or knew any thing of the strange occurrences of this troublesome and busy age, such as I think are hardly to be parallel'd in any other. Or if he did mind them, he scarce ever spoke any thing about them. For this was the business he laid to heart, and knowing it to be so much and so certainly the will of his heavenly father, it was his meat and drink to be doing of it: and the good success he had in it was a continual feast to him, and gave him a perpetual serenity both of mind and countenance. His great love and zeal for this work made all the pains and difficulties of it seem nothing to him: he would rise early and sit up late, and continued the same diligence and industry to the last, though he was in the threescore and seventeenth year of his age. And that he might manage the distribution of this great charity with his own hands, and see the good effect of it with his own eyes, he always once, but usually twice a year, at his own charge travelled over a great part of Wales, none of the best countries to travel in: but for the love of God and men, he endured all that, together with the extremity of heat and cold (which in their several seasons are both very great there) not only with patience, but with pleasure. So that all things considered there have not, since the primitive times of Christianity, been many among the sons of men to whom that glorious character of the Son of God might be better applied, that he went about doing good. And Wales may as worthily boast of this truly apostolical man as of their famous St. David; who was also very probably a good man, as those times of ignorance and superstition went. But his goodness is so disguised by their fabulous legends and stories which gives us the account of him, that it is not easy to discover it. Indeed ridiculous miracles in abundance are reported of him; as, that upon occasion of a great number of people resorting from all parts to hear him preach, for the greater advantage of his being heard, a mountain all on a sudden rose up miraculously under his feet, and
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his voice was extended to that degree that he might be distinctly heard for two or three miles round about. Such phantastical miracles as these make up a great part of his history. And admitting all these to be true (which a wise man would be loth to do) our departed friend had that which is much greater and more excellent than all these, a fervent charity to God and men; which is more than to speak (as they would make us believe St. David did) with the tongue of men and angels, more than to raise or remove mountains.

Aed now methinks it is pity so good a design so happily prosecuted should fall and die with this good man. And it is now under deliberation, if possible, still to continue and carry it on, and a very worthy and charitable person pitched upon for that purpose, who is willing to undertake that part which he that is gone performed so well: But this will depend upon the continuance of the former charities and the concurrence of those worthy and well-disposed persons in Wales to contribute their part as formerly; which I persuade myself they will cheerfully do.

I will add but one thing more concerning our deceased brother, that though he meddled not at all in our present heats and differences as a party, having much better things to mind; yet as a looker-on he did very sadly lament them, and for several of the last years of his life he continued in the communion of our church, and, as he himself told me, thought himself obliged in conscience so to do.

He died in the 77th year of his age, October 29, 1681. It so pleased God that his death was very sudden; and so sudden; that in all probability he himself hardly perceived it when it happened, for he died in his sleep; that we may say of him as it is said of David, *after he had served his generation according to the will of God, he fell asleep.*

I confess that a sudden death is generally undesirable and therefore with reason we pray against it; because very few are sufficiently prepared for it: but to him the constant employment of whose life was the best preparation

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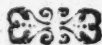
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paration for death that was possible, no death could be sudden; nay, it was rather a favour and blessing to him, because by how much the more sudden so much the more easy: as if GOD had designed to begin the reward of the great pains of his life in an easy death. And indeed it was rather a translation than a death; and, saying that his body was left behind, what was said of Enoch may not unfitly be applied to this pious and good man with respect to the suddenness of his change; *he walked with GOD, and was not, for GOD took him.*

And GOD grant that we who survive may all of us sincerely endeavour to tread in the steps of his exemplary piety and charity; of his labour of love, his unwearied diligence and patient continuance in doing good, that we may meet with that encouraging commendation which he hath already received from the mouth of our LORD, *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy LORD.*

Now the GOD of peace that brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you always that which is pleasing in his sight, through JESUS CHRIST; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.



S E R M O N XXIV.

Preached at the funeral of the reverend
Benjamin Whichcot, D. D.
May 24, 1683.

2 C O R. v. 6.

*Wherefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst
 we are at home in the body, we are absent from the*
 LORD.

TH E S E words contain one of the chief ground
 of encouragement which the christian religion
 gives us against the fear of death. For our
 clearer understanding of them it will be requisite
 to consider the context, looking back as far as the
 beginning of the chapter, where the apostle pursues the
 argument of the foregoing chapter; which was to comfort
 and encourage christians under their afflictions and
 sufferings from this consideration, that these did but pre-
 pare the way for a greater and more glorious reward.
*Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for
 us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* And
 suppose the worst, that these sufferings should extend
 to death, there is comfort for us likewise in this case, ver.
 4. of this chapter, *For we know that if our earthly house
 of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God
 &c.* If our earthly house of this tabernacle; he calls our
 body an earthly house, and that we may not look upon
 it as a certain abode and fixed habitation, he doth by way
 of correction of himself add, that it is but a tabernacle
 or tent which must shortly be taken down: and when
 it is, *we shall have a building of God, a house not made
 with hands, eternal in the heavens,* This is a description

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of our heavenly habitation, in opposition to our earthly house or tabernacle: it is a building of G O D, not like those houses or tabernacles which men build, and which are liable to decay and dissolution, to be taken down, or to fall down of themselves, for such are those houses of clay which we dwell in, *whose foundations are in the dust*, but an habitation prepared by G O D himself, *a house not made with hands*; that which is the immediate work of G O D, being in scripture opposed to that which is made with hands, and effected by humane concurrence, and by natural means: and being the immediate work of G O D, as it is excellent, so it is lasting and durable, which no earthly thing is; *eternal in the heavens*, that is eternal and heavenly.

For in this we groan earnestly; that is, while we are in this body we groan by reason of the pressures and afflictions of it. *Desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.* *Desiring to be clothed upon*, that is, we could wish not to put off these bodies, not to be stripp'd of them by death, but to be of the number of those who at the coming of our L O R D, without the putting off these bodies shall be changed and clothed upon with their house which is from heaven, and without dying be invested with those spiritual and glorious and heavenly bodies which men shall have at the resurrection.

This I doubt not is the apostle's meaning in these words; in which he speaks according to a common opinion among the disciples, grounded (as St. John tells us) upon a mistake of our S A V I O U R's words concerning him, *If I will that he tarry till I come*: upon which St. John tells us, that *there went a saying among the brethren that that disciple should not die*; that is, that he should live till C H R I S T's coming to judgment, and then be changed; and consequently that C H R I S T would come to judgment before the end of that age. Suitable to this common opinion among christians the apostle here says, *in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.* It hath puzzled in-

interpreters what to make of this passage, and well it might; for whatever be meant by being clothed, how can they that are clothed be found naked? but I think it is very clear that our translators have not attained the true sense of this passage, *Εἴτε κ' ἐδυσσαμένοι, ἢ γυμνοὶ ὑπερδεδόμεθα*, which is most naturally rendred thus, *if so be we shall be found clothed, and not naked*. That is, if the coming of CHRIST shall find us in the body and not divested of it; if at CHRIST's coming to judgment we shall be found alive and not dead. And then the sense of the whole is very clear and current; we are desirous to be clothed upon with our house from heaven (that is, with our spiritual and immortal bodies) if so be it shall so happen that at the coming of CHRIST we shall be found alive in these bodies, and not stripp'd of them before by death. And then it follows, *For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened*: (that is, with the afflictions and pressures of this life) *not that we would be unclothed*, (that is, not that we desire by death to be divested of these bodies) *but clothed upon*, (that is, if GOD see it good we had rather be found alive, and changed, and without putting off these bodies have immortality as it were superinduced) *that so mortality might be swallowed up of life*. The plain sense is, that he rather desires (if it may be) to be of the number of those who shall be found alive at the coming of CHRIST, and have this mortal and corruptible body, while they are clothed with it, changed into a spiritual and incorruptible body without the pain and terror of dying: of which immediate translation into heaven without the painful divorce of soul and body by death, Enoch and Elias were examples in the old testament.

It follows, ver. 5. *Now be that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is GOD*: that is, it is he who hath fitted and prepared us for this glorious change: *who hath also given us the earnest of the SPIRIT*. • The SPIRIT frequently in scripture called the witness, and seal, and earnest of our future happiness, and blessed resurrection or change of these vile and earthly bodies into spiritual and heavenly bodies, For as the resurrection of CHRIST

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from the great power of him that is the pleaser of life.

From a the text, are always knowing the absent from which man in the body the design of house but body we and this condition inquam e natura d. We go out our home; turn but n. We are lined from cept out of heaven.

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from the dead by the power of the HOLY GHOST is the great proof and evidence of immortality ; so the SPIRIT of him that raised up JESUS from the dead dwelling in us, is the pledge and earnest of our resurrection to an immortal life.

From all which the apostle concludes in the words of the text, *Therefore we are always confident*, that is, we are always of good courage against the fear of death, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the LORD, ἐνδημῶντες ἐν τῷ σώματι, which may better be rendred whilst we converse or sojourn in the body, than whilst we are at home ; because the design of the apostle is to shew that the body is not our house but our tabernacle ; and that whilst we are in the body we are not at home, but pilgrims and strangers. And this notion the heathens had of our present life and condition in this world. *Ex vita discedo* (saith Tully) *tanquam ex hospitio non tanquam ex domo ; commorandi enim natura diversorium nobis, non habitandi locum dedit.* We go out of this life as it were from an inn, and not from our home ; nature having designed it to us as a place to sojourn but not to dwell in.

We are absent from the LORD ; that is, we are detained from the blessed sight and enjoyment of GOD, and kept out of the possession of that happiness which makes heaven.

So that the apostle makes an immediate opposition between our continuance in the body, and our blissful enjoyment of GOD ; and lays it down for a certain truth, that whilst we remain in the body we are detained from our happiness, and that so soon as ever we leave the body we shall be admitted into it, knowing that while we converse in the body we are absent from the LORD. And 1 Cor. 8. *we are willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the LORD* ; intimating that so soon as we quit these bodies we shall be admitted to the blessed sight and enjoyment of GOD.

My design from this text is to draw some useful corollaries or conclusions from this assertion of the apostle, that whilst we are in these bodies we are detained from

our happiness; and that so soon as ever we depart out of them we shall be admitted to the possession and enjoyment of it. And they are these,

1. The assertion shews us the vanity and falshood of that opinion, or rather dream, concerning the sleep of the soul from the time of death till the general resurrection. This is chiefly grounded upon that frequent metaphor in scripture by which death is resembled to sleep, and those that are dead are said to be fallen asleep. But this metaphor is no where in scripture, that I know of, applied to the soul, but to the body resting in the grave in order to its being awakened and raised up at the resurrection. And thus it is frequently used with express reference to the body, Dan. xii. 2. *Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.* Matth. xxvii. 52. *And the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints which slept arose.* Acts xiii. 36. *David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption;* which surely can no otherwise be understood than of his body. 1 Cor. xv. 20. *Now is CHRIST risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept;* that is, the resurrection of his body is the earnest and assurance that ours also shall be raised. And ver. 51. *We shall not all sleep, but shall all be changed;* where the apostle certainly speaks both of the death and change of these corruptible bodies. 1 Thess. iv. 14. *If we believe that JESUS died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in JESUS shall God bring with him;* that is, the bodies of those that died in the LORD shall be raised, and accompany him at his coming. So that it is the body which is said in scripture to sleep, and not the soul. For that is utterly inconsistent with the apostle's assertion here in the text, *that while we are in the body we are absent from the LORD* and that so soon, as we depart out of the body we shall be present with the LORD. For surely to be with the LORD must signify a state of happiness, which sleep is not, but only of inactivity: besides, that the apostle's argument would be very flat, and it would be but a cold encouragement against the fear of death, that so soon

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we are dead we shall fall asleep and become insensible. But the apostle useth it as an argument why we should be willing to die as soon as GOD pleaseth, and the sooner the better, because so soon as we quit these bodies we shall be present with the LORD, that is, admitted to the blissful sight and enjoyment of him; and while we abide in the body we are detained from our happiness: but if our souls shall sleep as well as our bodies 'till the general resurrection, it is all one whether we continue in the body or not, as to any happiness we shall enjoy in the meantime; which is directly contrary to the main scope of the apostle's argument.

2. This assertion of the apostle's doth perfectly conclude against the feigned purgatory of the church of Rome; which supposeth the far greater number of true and faithful christians, of those who die in the LORD, and have obtained eternal redemption by him from hell not to pass immediately into a state of happiness, but to be detained in the suburbs of hell in extremity of torment (equal to that of hell for degree, though not for duration) 'till their souls be purged, and the guilt of temporal punishments which they are liable to, be some way or other paid off and discharged. They suppose indeed some very few holy persons (especially those who suffer martyrdom) to be so perfect at their departure out of the body as to pass immediately into heaven, because they need no purification: but most christians they suppose to die so imperfect that they stand in need of being purged; and according to the degree of their imperfection are to be detain'd shorter or a longer time in purgatory.

But now, besides that there is no text in scripture from whence any such state can probably be concluded (as acknowledged by many learned men of the church of Rome) and even that text which they have most insisted upon (*they shall be saved, yet so as by fire*) is given up by them as insufficient to conclude the thing. Esius is very glad to get off it, by saying there is nothing in it against purgatory: why? no body pretends that, but we might reasonably expect that there should be something to it in a text which hath been so often produced and

urged by them for the proof of it. I say, besides that there is nothing in scripture for purgatory, there are a great many things against it, and utterly inconsistent with it. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, which was designed to represent to us the different states of good and bad men in another world, there is not the least intimation of purgatory, but that good men pass immediately into a state of happiness, and bad men into a place of torment. And St. John, Rev. xiy. 13. pronounceth all that die in the LORD happy, because *they rest from their labours*; which they cannot be said to do who are in a state of great anguish and torment, as those are supposed to be who are in purgatory.

But above all, this reasoning of St. Paul is utterly inconsistent with any imagination of such a state. For he encourageth all christians in general against the fear of death from the consideration of that happy state they should immediately pass into, by being admitted into the presence of GOD; which surely is not purgatory. *We are of good courage* (says he) *and willing rather to be absent from the body*: and great reason we should be so, if so soon as we leave the body we are present with the LORD. But no man sure would be glad to leave the body to go into a place of exquisite and extreme torment, which they tell us is the case of most christians when they die. And what can be more unreasonable, than to make the apostle use an argument to comfort all christians against the fear of death which concerns but very few in comparison? So that if the apostle's reasoning be good, that while we are in this life we are detained from our happiness, and so soon as we depart this life we pass immediately into it, and therefore death is desirable to all good men: I say, if this reasoning be good, it is very clear that St. Paul knew nothing of the doctrine now taught in the church of Rome concerning purgatory; because that is utterly inconsistent with what he expressly asserts in this chapter, and quite takes away the force of his whole argument.

3. To encourage us against the fear of death. And this is the conclusion which the apostle makes from this
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consideration. *Therefore (says he) we are of good courage, knowing that whilst we converse in the body we are absent from the LORD.* There is in us a natural love of life, and a natural horror and dread of death; so that our spirits are apt to shrink at the thoughts of the approach of it. But this fear may very much be mitigated and even over-ruled by reason and the considerations of Religion. For death is not so dreadful in itself, as with regard to the consequences of it: and those will be as we are, comfortable and happy to the good, but dismal and miserable to the wicked. So that the only true antidote against the fear of death is the hopes of a better life; and the only firm ground of these hopes is the mercy of GOD in JESUS CHRIST, upon our due preparation for another world by repentance and a holy life. For the sting of death is sin; and when that is taken away the terror and bitterness of death is past; and then death is so far from being dreadful, that in reason it is extremely desirable; because it lets us into a better state, such as only deserves the name of life. *Hi vivunt qui ex corporum vinculis tanquam è carcere evolaverunt: vestra vero quæ dicitur vita, mors est.* They truly live (could a heathen say) who have made their escape out of this prison of the body; but that which men commonly call life is rather death than life. To live indeed, is to be well, and to be happy; and that we shall never be 'till we are got beyond the grave.

4. This consideration should comfort us under the loss and death of friends, which certainly is one of the greatest grievances and troubles of human life. For if they be fit for GOD, and go to him when they die, they are infinitely happier than it was possible for them to have been in this world; and the trouble of their absence from us is fully balanced by their being present with the LORD. For why should we lament the end of that life which we are assured is the beginning of immortality? The reason of our trouble for the loss of friends is because we loved them: but it is no sign of our love to them to grudge and repine at their happiness. But we ought to have enjoyed them longer; be it so; yet why should

should we be troubled that they are happy sooner than we expected? But they are parted from us, and the thought of this is grievous: but yet the consideration of their being parted for a while is not near so sad, as the hopes of a happy meeting again, never to be parted any more, is comfortable and joyful. So that the greater our love to them was, the less should be our grief for them, when we consider that they are happy, and that they are safe; past all storms, all the troubles and temptations of this life, and out of the reach of all harm and danger for ever. But though the reason of our duty in this case be very plain, yet the practice of it is very difficult; and when all is said, natural affection will have its course: and even after our judgment is satisfied, it will require some time to still and quiet our passions.

5. This consideration should wean us from the love of life; and make us not only contented, but willing and glad to leave this world, whenever it shall please God to call us out of it. This inference the apostle makes, ver. 8. *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the LORD.* Though there were no state of immortality after this life, yet methinks we should not desire to live always in this world. *Habet natura* (says Tully) *ut aliarum rerum, sic vivendi modum: As nature hath set bounds and measures to other things, so likewise to life;* of which men should know when they have enough, and not covet so much of it 'till they be tired and cloyed with it. If there were no other inconvenience in long life, this is a great one, that in a long course of time we unavoidably see a great many things which we would not; our own misfortunes and the calamities of others; publick confusions and distractions; the loss of friends and relations; or which is worse, their misery; or which is worst of all, their miscarriage: especially, a very infirm and tedious old age is very undesirable: for who would desire to live long uneasy to himself and troublesome to others? It is time for us to be willing to die, when we cannot live with the goodwill even of our friends: when those who ought to love us best think much that we live so long, and can hardly

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forbear to give us broad signs that they are weary of our company. In such a case a man would almost be contented to die out of civility; and not choose to make any long stay where he sees that his company is not acceptable. If we think we can be welcome to a better place, and to a more delightful society, why should we desire to thrust ourselves any longer upon an ill-natured world, upon those who have much ado to refrain from telling us that our room is better than our company?

Some indeed have a very happy and vigorous old age, and the taper of life burns clear in them to the last: their understandings are good, their memories and senses tolerable, their humour pleasant, and their conversation acceptable, and their relations kind and respectful to them. But this is a rare felicity, and which seldom happens but to those who have lived wisely and virtuously, and by a religious and regular course of life have preserved some of their best spirits to the last, and have not by vice and extravagance drawn off life to the dregs, and left nothing to be enjoyed but infirmities and ill humours, guilt and repentance: but on the contrary have prudently laid up some considerable comforts and supports for themselves against this gloomy day; having stored their minds with wisdom and knowledge, and taken care to secure to themselves the comfortable reflexions of an useful and well-spent life, and the favour and loving-kindness of God which is better than life itself. But generally the extremities of old age are very peevish and querulous, and declining and falling back to the weak and helpless condition of infancy and childhood. And yet less care is commonly taken to please aged persons, and less kindness shewed to them (unless it be in expectation of receiving greater from them) than to children: because these are cherished in hopes, the others in despair of their growing better. So that if God see it good it is not debatable to live to try nature, and the kindness and good-will of our relations to the utmost.

Nay there is reason enough why we should be contented to die in any age of our life. If we are young, we have tasted the best of it: if in our middle age, we have not only

only enjoyed all that is desirable of life, but almost all that is tolerable: if we are old, we come to the dregs of it, and do but see the same things over and over again, and continually with less pleasure.

Especially if we consider the happiness from which we are all this while detained. This life is but our infancy and childhood in comparison of the manly pleasures and enjoyments of the other state. And why should we desire to be always children; and to linger here below to play the fools yet a little longer? In this sense that high expression of the poet is true,

— *Dii celant homines, ut vivere durent,
Quàm sit dulce mori* —

The gods conceal from men the sweetness of dying, to make them patient and contented to live.

This life is wholly in order to the other. Do but make sure to live well, and there is no need of living long. To the purpose of preparation for another world, the best life is the longest. Some live a great pace, and by continual diligence and industry in serving God and doing good, do really dispatch more of the business of life in a few years, than others do in a whole age; who go such a santering pace towards heaven, as if they were in no haste to get thither. But if we were always prepared we should rejoice at the prospect of our end; as those who have been long tost at sea are overjoyed at the sight of land.

I have now done with my text, but have another subject to speak of; that excellent man in whose place I now stand; whom we all knew, and whom all that knew him did highly esteem and reverence. He was born in Shropshire of a worthy and ancient family, the 11th of March, 1609, was the sixth son of his father: and being bred up to learning, and very capable of it, was sent to the university of Cambridge, and planted there in Emanuel college, where he was chosen fellow, and was an excellent tutor and instructor of youth, and bred up many persons of quality, and others, who afterwards proved useful and eminent; as many perhaps as any tutor of that time.

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About the age of four or five and thirty he was made provost of Kings-college ; where he was a most vigilant and prudent governor, a great encourager of learning and good order, and by his careful and wise management of the estate of the college, brought it into a very flourishing condition, and left it so.

It cannot be denied (nor am I much concerned to dissemble it) that here he possess'd another man's place, who by the iniquity of the times was wrongfully ejected ; I mean Dr. Collins the famous and learned divinity-professor of that university. During whose life (and he lived many years after) by the free consent of the college there were two shares out of the common dividend allotted to the provost, one whereof was constantly paid to Dr. Collins, as if he had been still provost. To this Dr. Whichcot did not only give his consent (without which the thing could not have been done) but was very forward for the doing it, though hereby he did not only considerably lessen his own profit, but likewise incur no small censure and hazard, as the times then were. And lest this had not been kindness enough to that worthy person whose place he possessed, in his last will he left his son, Sir John Collins, a legacy of one hundred pounds.

And as he was not wanting either in respect or real kindness to the rightful owner, so neither did he stoop to any thing unworthy to obtain that place ; for he never broke the covenant : and not only so, but by the particular friendship and interest which he had in some of the chief visitors, he prevailed to have the greatest part of the fellows of that college exempted from that imposition ; and preserved them in their places by that means. And the fellows that were ejected by the visitors, he likewise freely consented that their full dividend for that year should be paid them, even after they were ejected. Among these was the reverend and ingenious Dr. Charles Wilson ; upon whom after he was ejected, the college did offer a good living which then fell in their gift, with the consent of the provost, who, knowing him to be a worthy man, was content to run the hazard of the disfigure of those times.

So that I hope none will be hard upon him, that he was contented upon such terms to be in a capacity to do good in bad times.

For, besides his care of the college, he had a very great and good influence upon the university in general. Every LORD's day in the afternoon, for almost twenty years together, he preached in Trinity-church, where he had a great number not only of the young scholars, but of those of greater standing and best repute for learning in the university, his constant and attentive auditors: and in those wild and unsettled times contributed more to the forming of the students of that university to a sober sense of religion than any man in that age.

After he left Cambridge he came to London, and was chosen minister of Black-Friers, where he continued 'till the dreadful fire, and then retired himself to a domestic he had at Milton near Cambridge; where he preached constantly, and relieved the poor, and had their children taught to read at his own charge; and made up differences among the neighbours. Here he stayed 'till, by the promotion of the reverend Dr. Wilkins, his predecessor in this place, to the bishoprick of Chester, he was by his interest and recommendation presented to the church. But during the building of it, upon the invitation of the court of aldermen, in the mayoralty of Sir William Turner, he preached before that honourable audience at Guildhall-chapel every sunday in the afternoon with great acceptance and approbation, for about the space of seven years.

When his church was built, he bestowed his pains here twice a week, where he had the general love and respect of his parish; and a very considerable and judicious auditory, though not very numerous by reason of the weakness of his voice in his declining age.

It pleased God to bless him, as with a plentiful estate so with a charitable mind: which yet was not so well known to many, because in the disposal of his charity very much affected secrecy. He frequently bestowed his alms (as I am informed by those who best knew) on poor house-keepers disabled by age or sickness to support themselves

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selves, thinking those to be the most proper objects of it. He was rather frugal in expence upon himself, that so he might have wherewithal to relieve the necessities of others.

And he was not only charitable in his life, but in a very bountiful manner at his death; bequeathing in pious and charitable legacies to the value of a thousand pounds. To the library of the university of Cambridge fifty pounds: and of Kings-college one hundred pounds: and of Emanuel-college twenty pounds: to which college he had been a considerable benefactor before; having founded there several scholarships to the value of a thousand pounds, out of a charity with the disposal whereof he was intrusted, and which not without great difficulty and pains he at last recovered.

To the poor of the several places where his estate lay, and where he had been minister, he gave above one hundred pounds.

Among those who had been his servants, or were so at his death, he disposed in annuities and legacies in money to the value of above three hundred pounds.

To other charitable uses and among the poorer of his relations above three hundred pounds.

To every one of his tenants he left a legacy according to the proportion of the estate they held, by way of remembrance of him; and to one of them that was gone much behind he remitted in his will seventy pounds. And as became his great goodness, he was ever a remarkably kind landlord, forgiving his tenants, and always making abatements to them for hard years or any other accidental losses that happened to them.

I must not omit the wise provision he made in his will to prevent law-suits among the legatees, by appointing two or three persons of greatest prudence and authority among his relations final arbitrators of all differences that should arise.

Having given this account of his last will, I come now to the sad part of all: sad I mean to us, but happiest to him. A little before Easter last he went down to Cambridge: where, upon taking a great cold, he fell into a

distemper which in a few days put a period to his life. He died in the house of his ancient and most learned friend, Dr. Cudworth, master of Christ's-college. During his sickness he had a constant calmness and serenity of mind: and under all his bodily weakness posselt his soul in great patience. After the prayers for the visitation of the sick (which he said were excellent prayers) had been used, he was put in mind of receiving the sacrament; to which he answered, that he most readily embraced the proposal: and after he had received it, said to Dr. Cudworth, I heartily thank you for this most christian office: I thank you for putting me in mind of receiving this sacrament: adding this pious ejaculation, The LORD fulfill all his declarations and promises, and pardon all my weaknesses and imperfections. He disclaimed all merit in himself; and declared that whatever he was, he was through the grace and goodness of GOD in JESUS CHRIST. He expressed likewise great dislike of the principles of separation; and said he was the more desirous to receive the sacrament that he might declare his full communion with the church of CHRIST all the world over. He disclaimed popery, and as things of near affinity with it, or rather parts of it, all superstition, and usurpation upon the consciences of men.

He thanked GOD, that he had no pain in his body, nor disquiet in his mind.

Towards his last he seemed rather unwilling to be detained any longer in this state; not for any pains he felt in himself, but for the trouble he gave his friends: saying to one of them who had with great care attended him all along in his sickness, my dear friend, thou hast taken a great deal of pains to uphold a crazy body, but it will not do: I pray thee give me no more cordials; for what shouldst thou keep me any longer out of that happy state to which I am going? I thank GOD I hope in his mercy that it shall be well with me.

And herein GOD was pleased particularly to answer those devout and well-weighed petitions of his, which he frequently used in his prayer before sermon, which I have set down in his own words, and I doubt not those that

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were his constant hearers do well remember them; and superadd this, O LORD, to all the grace and favour which thou hast shewn us all along in life, not to remove us hence but with all advantage for eternity, when we shall be in a due preparation of mind, in a holy constitution of soul, in a perfect renunciation of the guise of this mad and sinful world, when we shall be intirely resigned up to thee, when we shall have clear acts of faith in GOD by JESUS CHRIST, high and reverential thoughts of thee in our minds, enlarged and inflamed affections towards thee, &c. And whensoever we shall come to leave this world, which will be when thou shalt appoint (for the issues of life and death are in thy hands) afford us such a mighty power and presence of thy good spirit, that we may have solid consolation in believing, and avoid all consternation of mind, all doubtfulness and uncertainty concerning our everlasting condition, and at length depart in the faith of GOD's elect, &c. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.

Thus you have a short history of the life and death of this eminent person; whose just character cannot be given in few words, and time will not allow me to use many. To be able to describe him aright it were necessary one should be like him; for which reason I must content myself with a very imperfect draught of him.

I shall not insist upon his exemplary piety and devotion towards GOD, of which his whole life was one continued testimony. Nor will I praise his profound learning, for which he was justly had in so great reputation. The moral improvements of his mind, a god-like temper and disposition (as he was wont to call it) he chiefly valued and aspired after; that universal charity and goodness, which he did continually preach and practise.

His conversation was exceeding kind and affable, grave and winning, prudent and profitable. He was slow to declare his judgment, and modest in delivering it. Never passionate, never peremptory: so far from imposing upon others, that he was rather apt to yield. And though he had a most profound and well-poised judgment, yet was he of all men I ever knew the most patient to hear others

differ from him, and the most easy to be convinced when good reason was offered; and, which is seldom seen, more apt to be favourable to another man's reason than his own.

Studious and inquisitive men commonly at such an age (at forty or fifty at the utmost) have fixed and settled their judgments in most points, and as it were made their last understanding; supposing they have thought, or read, or heard what can be said on all sides of things; and after that, they grow positive and impatient of contradiction, thinking it a disparagement to them to alter their judgment: but our deceased friend was so wise, as to be willing to learn to the last; knowing that no man can grow wiser without some change of his mind, without gaining some knowledge which he had not, or correcting some error which he had before.

He had attained so perfect a mastery of his passions, that for the latter and greatest part of his life he was hardly ever seen to be transported with anger: and as he was extremely careful not to provoke any man, so not to be provoked by any; using to say, if I provoke any man he is the worse for my company, and if I suffer myself to be provoked by him I shall be the worse for his.

He very seldom reproved any person in company otherwise than by silence, or some sign of uneasiness, or some very soft and gentle word; which yet from the respect men generally bore to him did often prove effectual: for he understood humane nature very well, and how to apply himself to it in the most easy and effectual ways.

He was a great encourager and kind director of young divines: and one of the most candid hearers of sermons, I think, that ever was: so that though all men did mightily reverence his judgment, yet no man had reason to fear his censure. He never spake well of himself, nor ill of others: making good that saying of Pansa in Tully, *Neminem alterius, qui suæ consideret virtuti, invidere; that no man is apt to envy the worth and virtues of another, that bath any of his own to trust to.*

In a word, he had all those virtues, and in a high degree, which an excellent temper, great consideration,

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long care and watchfulness over himself, together with the assistance of God's grace (which he continually implored, and mightily relied upon) are apt to produce. Particularly he excelled in the virtues of conversation, humanity, and gentleness, and humility, a prudent and peaceable and reconciling temper. And God knows we could very ill at this time have spared such a man; and have lost from among us as it were so much balm for the healing of the nation, which is now so miserably rent and torn by those wounds which we madly give ourselves. But since God hath thought good to deprive us of him, let his virtues live in our memory, and his example in our lives. Let us endeavour to be what he was, and we shall one day be what he now is, of blessed memory on earth, and happy for ever in heaven.

And now methinks the consideration of the argument I have been upon, and of that great example that is before us, should raise our minds above this world, and fix them upon the glory and happiness of the other. Let us then begin heaven here, in the frame and temper of our minds, in our heavenly affections and conversation; in a due preparation for, and in earnest desires and breathings after that blessed state which we firmly believe and assuredly hope to be one day possessed of: when we shall be removed out of this sink of sin and sorrows into the regions of bliss and immortality: where we shall meet all those worthy and excellent persons who are gone before us, and whose conversation was so delightful to us in this world; and will be much more so to us in the other, when the spirits of just men shall be made perfect, and shall be quit of all those infirmities which did attend and lessen them in this mortal state; when we shall meet again with our dear brother, and all those good men whom we knew in this world, and with the saints and excellent persons of all ages, to enjoy their blessed friendship and society for ever, in the presence of the blessed God, where is *fulnefs of joy, at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.*

In a firm persuasion of this happy state let us every one of us say with David, and with the same ardency of affection that he did, *As the hart panteth after the water-*

brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O GOD; my soul thirsteth for GOD, for the living GOD; O when shall I come and appear before GOD; that so the life which we now live in this world may be a patient continuance in well-doing in a joyful expectation of the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of the great GOD and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; to whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

Now the GOD of peace who brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will; working in us always that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through JESUS CHRIST; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XXV.

A persuasive to frequent communion.

1 C O R. xi. 26, 27, 28.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the LORD's death 'till he come.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the LORD unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the LORD.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

MY design in this argument is, from the consideration of the nature of this sacrament of the LORD's supper, and of the perpetual use of it to the end of the world, to awaken men to a sense of their duty, and the great obligation that lies upon them to the more frequent receiving of it. And there

there is the greater need to make men sensible of their duty in this particular, because in this last age by the unwary discourse of some concerning the nature of this sacrament and the danger of receiving it unworthily, such doubts and fears have been raised in the minds of men, as utterly to deter many; and in a great measure to discourage almost the generality of christians from the use of it; to the great prejudice and danger of mens souls, and the visible abatement of piety, by the gross neglect of so excellent a means of our growth and improvement in it; and to the mighty scandal of our religion, by the general disuse and contempt of so plain and solemn an institution of our blessed LORD and SAVIOUR.

Therefore I shall take occasion, as briefly and as clearly as I can, to treat of these four points.

First, of the perpetuity of this institution; this the apostle signifies when he saith, that *by eating this bread, and drinking this cup, we do shew the LORD's death 'till he come.*

Secondly, of the obligation that lies upon all christians to a frequent observance of this institution; this is signified in that expression of the apostle, *as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup:* which expression considered and compared together with the practice of the primitive church, does imply an obligation upon christians to the frequent receiving of this sacrament.

Thirdly, I shall endeavour to satisfy the objections and scruples which have been raised in the minds of men, and particularly of many devout and sincere christians, to their great discouragement from their receiving this sacrament, at least so frequently as they ought: which objections are chiefly grounded upon what the apostle says, *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the LORD unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the LORD: and doth eat and drink damnation to himself.*

Fourthly, what preparation of ourselves is necessary in order to our worthy receiving of this sacrament; which will give me occasion to explain the apostle's meaning in those words, *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

I. For

I. For the perpetuity of this institution, implied in those words, *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the LORD's death till he come*; or the words may be read imperatively and by way of precept, *shew ye forth the LORD's death 'till he come*. In the three verses immediately before, the apostle particularly declares the institution of this sacrament, with the manner and circumstances of it, as he had received it not only by the hands of the apostles, but as the words seem rather to intimate, by immediate revelation from our LORD himself, ver. 23. *For I have received of the LORD that which I also delivered unto you: that the LORD JESUS in the same night that he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do as often as ye shall drink it in remembrance of me.* So that the institution is in these words, *this do in remembrance of me*. In which words our LORD commands his disciples after his death to repeat these occasions of taking, and breaking, and eating the bread, and of drinking of the cup, by way of solemn commemoration of him. Now whether this was to be done by them once only, or oftner; and whether by the disciples only during their lives, or by all christians afterwards in all successive ages of the church is not so certain merely from the force of these words, *this in remembrance of me*: but what the apostle adds puts the matter out of all doubt, that the institution of this sacrament was intended, not only for the apostles, and for that age, but for all christians, and for all ages of the christian church; *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the LORD's death 'till he come*; that is, until the time of his second coming, which will be at the end of the world. So that this sacrament was designed to be a standing commemoration of the death and passion of our LORD 'till he should come to judgment; and consequently the obligation that lies upon christians to the observation of it is perpetual, and shall never cease to the end of the world.

So that it is a vain conceit and mere dream of the enthusiasts concerning the *seculum Spiritus Sancti*, the age and dispensation of the HOLY GHOST, when, as they suppose, all humane teaching shall cease, and all external ordinances and institutions in religion shall vanish, and there shall be no farther use of them. Whereas it is very plain from the new testament, that prayer, and outward teaching, and the use of the two sacraments, were intended to continue among christians in all ages. As for prayer, (besides our natural obligation to this duty, if there were no revealed religion) we are by our SAVIOUR particularly exhorted to watch and pray with regard to the day of judgment, and in consideration of the uncertainty of the time when it shall be: and therefore this will always be a duty incumbent upon christians 'till the day of judgment, because it is prescribed as one of the best ways of preparation for it. That outward teaching likewise and baptism were intended to be perpetual is no less plain, because CHRIST hath expressly promised to be with the teachers of his church in the use of these ordinances to the end of the world, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. *Go and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST: and lo I am with you always to the end of the world.* Not only to the end of that particular age, but to the end of the gospel-age, and the consummation of all ages, as the phrase clearly imports. And it is plain from this text, that the sacrament of the LORD's supper was instituted as a perpetual institution in the christian church, 'till the second coming of CHRIST, viz. his coming to judgment: because St. Paul tells us, that by these sacramental signs the death of CHRIST is to be represented and commemorated 'till he comes. *Do this in remembrance of me: for as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the LORD's death 'till he come.*

And if this be the end and use of this sacrament, to be a solemn remembrance of the death and sufferings of our LORD during his absence from us, that is, 'till his coming to judgment, then this sacrament will never be out of date 'till the second coming of our LORD. The consideration whereof

whereof should mightily strengthen and encourage our faith in the hope of eternal life so often as we partake of this sacrament: since our LORD hath left it to us as a memorial of himself 'till he came to translate his church into heaven, and as a sure pledge that he will come again at the end of the world, and invest us in that glory which he is now gone before to prepare for us. So that as often as we approach the table of the LORD, we should comfort ourselves with the thoughts of that blessed time when we shall eat and drink with him in his kingdom, and shall be admitted to the great feast of the lamb, and to eternal communion with GOD the judge of all, and with our blessed and glorified redeemer, and the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.

And the same consideration should likewise make us afraid to receive this sacrament unworthily, without due preparation for it, and without worthy effects of it upon our hearts and lives; because of that dreadful sentence of condemnation which at the second coming of our LORD shall be past upon those, who by the profanation of this solemn institution trample under foot the SON of GOD, and contemn the blood of the covenant; that covenant of grace and mercy which GOD hath ratified with mankind by the blood of his SON. The apostle tells us that *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of the LORD, and eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* This indeed is spoken of temporal judgment (as I shall shew in the latter part of this discourse), but the apostle likewise supposeth, that if these temporal judgments had not their effect to bring men to repentance, but they still persisted in the profanation of this holy sacrament, they should at last *be condemned with the world.* For as he that partaketh worthily of this sacrament confirms his interest in the promises of the gospel, and his title to eternal life; so he that receives this sacrament unworthily, that is, without due reverence, and without fruits meet for it; nay, on the contrary, continues to live in sin whilst he commemorates the death of CHRIST, *who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity*, this man aggravates and seals his own damnation,

because

because he is guilty of the body and blood of CHRIST, not only by the contempt of it, but by renewing in some sort the cause of his sufferings, and as it were *crucifying to himself afresh the LORD of life and glory, and putting him to an open shame.* And when the great judge of the world shall appear and pass final sentence upon men, such obstinate and impenitent wretches as could not be wrought upon by the remembrance of the dearest love of their dying LORD, nor be engaged to leave their sins by all the ties and obligations of this holy sacrament, shall have their portion with Pilate and Judas, with the chief priests and soldiers, who were the betrayers and murderers of the LORD of life and glory; and shall be dealt withal as those who are in some sort *guilty of the body and blood of the LORD.* Which severe threatening ought not to discourage men from the sacrament, but to deter all those from their sins who think of engaging themselves to GOD by so solemn and holy a covenant. It is by no means a sufficient reason to make men fly from the sacrament, but certainly one of the most powerful arguments in the world to make men forsake their sins; as I shall shew more fully under the third head of this discourse.

II. The obligation that lies upon all christians to the frequent observance and practice of this institution. For though it be not necessarily implied in these words, *as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup*; yet if we compare these words of the apostle with the usage and practice of christians at that time, which was to communicate in this holy sacrament so often as they solemnly met together to worship GOD, they plainly suppose and recommend to us the frequent use of this sacrament, or rather imply an obligation upon christians to embrace all opportunities of receiving it. For the sense and meaning of any law or institution is best understood by the general practice which follows immediately upon it.

And to convince men of their obligation hereunto, and to engage them to a suitable practice, I shall now endeavour with all the plainness and force of persuasion I can: And so much the more, because the neglect of it among christians is grown so general, and a great many persons

persons from a superstitious awe and reverence of this sacrament are by degrees fallen into a profane neglect and contempt of it.

I shall briefly mention a threefold obligation lying upon all christians to frequent communion in this holy sacrament; each of them sufficient of itself, but all of them together of the greatest force imaginable to engage us hereunto.

1. We are obliged in point of indispensable duty, and in obedience to a plain precept and most solemn institution of our blessed SAVIOUR that great lawgiver, *who is able to save and to destroy*, as St. James calls him: He hath bid us *do this*. And St. Paul who declares nothing in this matter but what he tells us he *received from the LORD*, admonisheth us to do it often. Now for any man that professeth himself a christian to live in the open and continued contempt or neglect of a plain law and institution of CHRIST is utterly inconsistent with such a profession. To such our LORD may say as he did to the jews, *Why call ye me LORD, LORD, and do not the things which I say?* how far the ignorance of this institution, or the mistakes which men have been led into about it, may extenuate this neglect, is another consideration. But after we know our LORD's will in this particular and have the law plainly laid before us, there is no cloke for our sin. For nothing can excuse the wilful neglect of a plain institution from a downright contempt of our SAVIOUR's authority.

2. We are likewise obliged hereunto in point of interest. The benefits which we expect to be derived are assured to us by this sacrament are all the blessings of the new covenant, the forgiveness of our sins, the grace and assistance of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT to enable us to perform the conditions of this covenant required on our part, and the comforts of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT to encourage us in well-doing, and to support us under sufferings; and the glorious reward of eternal life. So that in neglecting this sacrament we neglect our own interest and happiness, we forsake our own mercies, and judge ourselves unworthy of all the blessings of the gospel, and deprive ourselves

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one of the best means and advantages of confirming and conveying these blessings to us. So that if we had not a due sense of our duty, the consideration of our own interest should oblige us not to neglect so excellent and so effectual a means of promoting our own comfort and happiness.

3. We are likewise particularly obliged in point of gratitude to the careful observance of this institution. This was the particular thing our LORD gave in charge when he was going to lay down his life for us, *do this in remembrance of me*. Men use religiously to observe the charge of a dying friend, and, unless it be very difficult and unreasonable, to do what he desires: but this is the charge of our best friend (nay of the greatest friend and benefactor of all mankind) when he was preparing himself to die in our stead and to offer up himself a sacrifice for us; to undergo the most grievous pains and sufferings for our sakes, and to yield up himself to the worst of temporal deaths that he might deliver us from the bitter pains of eternal death. And can we deny him any thing he asks of us who was going to do all this for us? can we deny him this? so little grievous and burdensome in itself, so infinitely beneficial to us? had such a friend, and in such circumstances, bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it? how much more when he hath only said, *do this in remembrance of me*; when he hath only commended to us one of the most natural and delightful Actions, as a fit representation and memorial of his wonderful love to us, and of his cruel sufferings for our sakes; when he hath only enjoined us, in a thankful commemoration of this goodness, to meet at his table and to remember what he hath done for us, to look upon him whom we have pierced, and to resolve to grieve and wound him no more? can we without the most horrible ingratitude neglect this dying charge of our Sovereign and our SAVIOUR, the great friend and lover of souls? a command so reasonable, so easy, so full of blessings and benefits to the faithful observers of it!

One would think it were no difficult matter to convince men of their duty in this particular, and of the necessity

of observing so plain an institution of our LORD; that it were no hard thing to persuade men to their interest, and to be willing to partake of those great and manifold blessings which all christians believe to be promised and made good to the frequent and worthy receivers of this sacrament. Where then lies the difficulty? what should be the cause of all this backwardness which we see in men to so plain, so necessary, and so beneficial a duty? the truth is, men have been greatly discouraged from this sacrament by the unwary pressing and inculcating of two great truths: the danger of the unworthy receiving of this holy sacrament, and the necessity of a due preparation for it. Which brings me to the

III. Third particular I proposed, which was to endeavour to satisfy the objections and scruples which have been raised in the minds of men, and particularly of many devout and sincere christians, to their great discouragement from the receiving of this sacrament, at least so frequently as they ought. And these objections, I told you, are chiefly grounded upon what the apostle says at the 27th verse. *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the LORD unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the LORD.* And again ver. 29. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* Upon the mistake and misapplication of these texts have been grounded two objections, of great force to discourage men from this sacrament, which I shall endeavour with all the tenderness and clearness I can to remove. First, that the danger of unworthy receiving being so very great, it seems the safest way not to receive at all. Secondly, that so much preparation and worthiness being required in order to our worthy receiving, the more timorous sort of devout christians can never think themselves due enough qualified for so sacred an action.

Obj. 1. That the danger of unworthy receiving being so very great, it seems the safest way wholly to refrain from this sacrament and not receive it at all. But this objection is evidently of no force if there be (as manifestly there is) as great or greater danger on the other hand, viz. in the neglect of this duty: and so thou

the danger of unworthy receiving be avoided by not receiving, yet the danger of neglecting and contemning a plain institution of CHRIST is not thereby avoided. Surely they in the parable that refused to come to the marriage-feast of the king's son, and made light of that gracious invitation, were at least as faulty as he who came *without a wedding garment*. And we find in the conclusion of the parable, that as he was severely punished for his disrespect, so they were destroyed for their disobedience. Nay of the two it is the greater sin of contempt wholly to neglect the sacrament, than to partake of it without some due qualification. The greatest indisposition that can be for this holy sacrament is one's being a bad man, and he may be as bad, and is more likely to continue so, who wilfully neglects this sacrament, than he that comes to it with any degree of reverence and preparation, though much less than he ought: and surely it is very hard for men to come to so solemn an ordinance without some kind of religious awe upon their spirits, and without some good thoughts and resolutions, at least for the present. If a man that lives in any known wickedness of life do before he receive the sacrament set himself seriously to be humbled for his sins, and to repent of them, and to beg God's grace and assistance against them; and after the receiving of it, does continue for some time in these good resolutions, though after a while he may possibly relapse into the same sins again; this is some kind of restraint to a wicked life; and these good moods and fits of repentance and reformation are much better than a constant and uninterrupted course of sin: even this righteousness, which is but *as the morning cloud and the early dew which so soon passeth away*, is better than none.

And indeed scarce any man can think of coming to the sacrament, but he will by this consideration be excited to some good purposes, and put upon some sort of endeavour to amend and reform his life: and though he be very much under the bondage and power of evil habits, if he do with any competent degree of sincerity (and it is his own fault if he do not) make use of this excellent means

and instrument for the mortifying and subduing of his lusts and for the obtaining of God's grace and assistance, it may please God by the use of these means so to abate the force and power of his lusts, and to imprint such considerations upon his mind in the receiving of this holy sacrament and preparing himself for it, that he may at last break off his wicked course and become a good man.

But, on the other hand, as to those who neglect this sacrament, there is hardly any thing left to restrain them from the greatest enormities of life, and to give a check to them in their evil course: nothing but the penalty of humane laws, which men may avoid and yet be wicked enough. Heretofore men used to be restrained from great and scandalous vices by shame and fear of disgrace, and would abstain from many sins out of regard to their honour and reputation among men: but men have hardened their faces in this degenerate age, and those gentle restraints of modesty which governed and kept men in order heretofore signify nothing now-a-days: blushing is out of fashion, and shame is ceased from among the children of men.

But the sacrament did always use to lay some kind of restraint upon the worst of men: and if it did not wholly reform them, it would at least have some good effect upon them for a time: if it did not make men good, yet it would make them resolve to be so, and leave some good thoughts and impressions upon their minds.

So that I doubt not but it hath been a thing of very bad consequence, to discourage men so much from the sacrament, as the way hath been of late years: and that many men who were under some kind of check before, since they have been driven away from the sacrament, have quite let loose the reins, and prostituted themselves to all manner of impiety and vices. And among the many ill effects of our past confusions, this is none of the least, that in many congregations of this kingdom christians were generally disused and deterred from the sacrament, upon pretence that they were unfit for it: and being so, they must necessarily incur the danger of unworthy receiving; and therefore they had better wholly
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abstain from it. By which it came to pass that in very many places this great and solemn institution of the christian religion was almost quite forgotten, as if it had been no part of it; and the remembrance of CHRIST's death even lost among christians: so that many congregations in England might justly have taken up the complaint of the woman at our SAVIOUR's sepulchre, *they have taken away our LORD, and we know not where they have laid him?*

But surely men did not well consider what they did, nor what the consequences of it would be, when they did so earnestly dissuade men from the sacrament. 'Tis true indeed the danger of unworthy receiving is great; but the proper inference and conclusion from hence is not that men should upon this consideration be deterred from the sacrament, but that they should be affrighted from their sins, and from that wicked course of life which is an habitual indisposition and unworthiness. St. Paul indeed (as I observed before) truly represents, and very much aggravates the danger of the unworthy receiving of this sacrament; but he did not deter the Corinthians from it, because they had sometimes come to it without due reverence, but exhorts them to amend what had been amiss, and to come better prepared and disposed for the future. And therefore after that terrible declaration in the text, *Whoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the LORD unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the LORD*, he does not add, therefore let christians take heed of coming to the sacrament, but, let them come prepared and with due reverence, not as to a common meal, but to a solemn participation of the body and blood of CHRIST; but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup?

For, if this be a good reason to abstain from the sacrament, for fear of performing so sacred an action in an undue manner, it were best for a bad man to lay aside all religion, and to give over the exercise of all the duties of piety, of prayer, of reading and hearing the word of God; because there is a proportionable danger in the unworthy and unprofitable use of any of these. *Th.*

prayer of the wicked (that is, of one that resolves to continue so) *is an abomination to the LORD.* And our SAVIOUR gives us the same caution concerning hearing the word of GOD; *take heed how you hear.* And St. Paul tells us, that those who are not reformed by the doctrine of the gospel, it is the favour of death, that is, deadly and damnable to such persons.

But now will any man from hence argue, that it is best for a wicked man not to pray, nor to hear or read the word of GOD, lest by so doing he should endanger and aggravate his condemnation? and yet there is as much reason from this consideration to persuade men to give over praying and attending to GOD's word, as to lay aside the use of the sacrament. And it is every whit as true that he that prays unworthily and hears the word of GOD unworthily, that is, without fruit and benefit, is guilty of a great contempt of GOD and of our blessed SAVIOUR; and by his indevout prayers and unfruitful hearing of GOD's word does further and aggravate his own damnation: I say, this is every whit as true, as that he that eats and drinks the sacrament unworthily is guilty of a high contempt of CHRIST, and *eats and drinks his own judgment*; so that the danger of the unworthy performing this so sacred an action is no otherwise a reason to any man to abstain from the sacrament, than it is an argument to him to cast off all religion. He that unworthily useth or performs any part of religion is in an evil and dangerous condition; but he that casts off all religion plungeth himself into a most desperate state, and does certainly damn himself to avoid the danger of damnation: because he that casts off all religion throws off all the means whereby he should be reclaimed and brought into a better state. I cannot more fitly illustrate this matter than by this plain similitude: he that eats and drinks intemperately endangers his health and his life, but he that to avoid this danger will not eat at all, I need not tell you what will certainly become of him in a very short space.

There are some conscientious persons who abstain from the sacrament upon an apprehension that the sins which they

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they shall commit afterwards are unpardonable. But this is a great mistake; our SAVIOUR having so plainly declared that all manner of sin shall be forgiven men except the blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST; such as was that of the pharisees, who, as our SAVIOUR tells us, blasphemed the HOLY GHOST in ascribing those great miracles which they saw him work, and which he really wrought by the SPIRIT of GOD, to the power of the devil. Indeed to sin deliberately after so solemn an engagement to the contrary is a great aggravation of sin, but not such as to make it unpardonable. But the neglect of the sacrament is not the way to prevent these sins; but, on the contrary, the constant receiving of it with the best preparation we can is one of the most effectual means to prevent sin for the future, and to obtain the assistance of GOD's grace to that end: and if we fall into sin afterwards, we may be renewed by repentance; *for we have an advocate with the father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins*; and as such, is in a very lively and affecting manner exhibited to us in this blessed sacrament of his body broken, and his blood shed for the remission of our sins. Can we think that the primitive christians, who so frequently received this holy sacrament, did never after the receiving of it fall into any deliberate sin? undoubtedly, many of them did; but far be it from us to think that such sins were unpardonable, and that so many good men should, because of their careful and conscientious observance of our LORD's institution, unavoidably fall into condemnation.

To draw to a conclusion of this matter: such groundless fears and jealousies as these may be a sign of a good meaning, but they are certainly a sign of an injudicious mind. For if we stand upon these scruples, no man perhaps was ever so worthily prepared to draw near to GOD in any duty of religion, but there was still some defect or other in the disposition of his mind, and the degree of his preparation. But if we prepare ourselves as well as we can, this is all GOD expects. And for our fears of falling into sin afterwards, there is this plain answer to be given to it; that the danger of falling into

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sin is not prevented by neglecting the sacrament, but increased: because a powerful and probable means of preserving men from sin is neglected. And why should not every sincere christian, by the receiving of this sacrament and renewing his covenant with GOD, rather hope to be confirmed in goodness, and to receive farther assistances of GOD's grace and HOLY SPIRIT to strengthen him against sin and to enable him to subdue it; than trouble himself with fears which are either without ground, or if they are not, are no sufficient reason to keep any man from the sacrament? We cannot surely entertain so unworthy a thought of GOD and our blessed SAVIOUR, as to imagine that he did institute the sacrament not for the furtherance of our salvation, but as a snare, and an occasion of our ruin and damnation. This were to pervert the gracious design of GOD, and to turn the cup of salvation into a cup of deadly poison to the souls of men.

All then that can reasonably be inferred from the danger of unworthy receiving is, that upon this consideration men should be quickened to come to the sacrament with a due preparation of mind, and so much the more to fortify their resolutions of living suitably to that holy covenant which they solemnly renew every time they receive this holy sacrament. This consideration ought to convince us of the absolute necessity of a good life, but not to deter us from the use of any means which may contribute to make us good. Therefore (as a learned divine says very well) this sacrament can be neglected by none but those that do not understand it, but those who are unwilling to be tied to their duty, and are afraid of being engaged to use their best diligence to keep the commandments of CHRIST: and such persons have no reason to fear being in a worse condition, since they are already in so bad a state. And thus much may suffice for answer to the first objection concerning the great danger of unworthy receiving this holy sacrament. I proceed to the

Obj. 2. Second objection, which was this; that so much preparation and worthiness being required to our worthy receiving, the more timorous sort of christians can never make themselves duly enough qualified for the sacred an action,

For a full answer to this objection, I shall endeavour briefly to clear these three things. First, that every degree of imperfection in our preparation for this sacrament is not a sufficient reason for men to refrain from it. Secondly, that a total want of a due preparation, not only in the degree but in the main and substance of it, though it render us unfit at present to receive this sacrament, yet it does by no means excuse our neglect of it. Thirdly, that the proper inference and conclusion from the total want of a due preparation is not to cast off all thoughts of receiving the sacrament, but immediately to set upon the work of preparation that so we may be fit to receive it. And if I can clearly make out these three things, I hope this objection is fully answered.

1. That every degree of imperfection in our preparation for this sacrament is not a sufficient reason for men to abstain from it: for then no man should ever receive it. For who is every way worthy, and in all degrees and respects duly qualified to approach the presence of God in any of the duties of his worship and service? Who can wash his hands in innocency, that so he may be perfectly fit to approach God's altar? *There is not a man on earth that lives and sins not.* The graces of the best men are imperfect; and every imperfection in grace and goodness is an imperfection in the disposition and preparation of our minds for this holy sacrament: but if we do heartily repent of our sins, and sincerely resolve to obey and perform the terms of the gospel, and of that covenant which we entered into by baptism, and are willing solemnly to renew and confirm by our receiving of this sacrament, we are at least in some degree and in the main qualified to partake of this holy sacrament; and the way for us to be more fit is to receive this sacrament frequently, that by this spiritual food of God's appointment, by *this living bread which comes down from heaven*, our souls may be nourished in goodness, and new strength and virtue may be continually derived to us for the purifying of our hearts, and enabling us to run the ways of God's commandments with more constancy and delight. *the way to grow in grace and to be strengthened with*
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all might in the inner man, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness which by CHRIST JESUS are to the praise and glory of God, is with care and conscience to use those means which God hath appointed for this end: and if we will neglect the use of these means it is to no purpose for us to pray to God for his grace and assistance. We may tire ourselves with our devotions, and fill heaven with vain complaints, and yet by all this importunity obtain nothing at God's hand: like lazy beggars that are always complaining and always asking, but will not work, will do nothing to help themselves and better their condition, and therefore are never like to move the pity and compassion of others. If we expect God's grace and assistance, we must work out our own salvation in the careful use of all those means which God hath appointed to that end. That excellent degree of goodness which men would have to fit them for the sacrament, is not to be had but by the use of it. And therefore it is a preposterous thing for men to insist upon having the end before they will use the means that may further them in the obtaining of it.

2. The total want of a due preparation, not only in the degree but in the main and substance of it, though it render us unfit at present to receive this sacrament, yet does it by no means excuse our neglect of it. One fault may draw on another, but can never excuse it. It is our great fault that we are wholly unprepared, and no man can claim any benefit by his fault, or plead it in excuse or extenuation of this neglect. A total want of preparation and an absolute unworthiness is impenitency in an evil course, a resolution to continue a bad man, not to quit his lusts and to break off that wicked course he hath lived in: but is this any excuse for the neglect of our duty, that we will not fit ourselves for the doing of it with benefit and advantage to ourselves? A father commands his son to ask him blessing every day, and is ready to give it him; but so long as he is undutiful to him in his other actions, and lives in open disobedience, forbids him to come in his sight. He excuseth himself from asking his father blessing, because he is undutiful in other things.

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and resolves to continue so. This is just the case of neglecting the duty God requires, and the blessings he offers to us in the sacrament, because we have made ourselves incapable of so performing the one as to receive the other; and are resolved to continue so. We will not do our duty in other things, and then plead that we are unfit and unworthy to do it in this particular of the sacrament.

3. The proper inference and conclusion from a total want of due preparation for the sacrament is not to cast off all thoughts of receiving it, but immediately to set about the work of preparation, that so we may be fit to receive it. For if this be true, that they who are absolutely unprepared ought not to receive the sacrament, nor can do it with any benefit; nay by doing it in such a manner render their condition much worse, this is a most forcible argument to repentance and amendment of life: there is nothing reasonable in this case but immediately to resolve upon a better course, that so we may be meet partakers of those holy mysteries, and may no longer provoke God's wrath against us by the wilful neglect of so great and necessary a duty of the christian religion. And we do wilfully neglect it, so long as we do wilfully refuse to fit and qualify ourselves for the due and worthy performance of it. Let us view the thing in a like case; a pardon is graciously offered to a rebel, he declines to accept it, and modestly excuseth himself because he is not worthy of it. And why is he not worthy? because he resolves to be a rebel, and then his pardon will do him no good, but be an aggravation of his crime. Very true: and it will be no less an aggravation that he refuseth it for such a reason, and under a pretence of modesty does the most imprudent thing in the world. This is just the case; and in this case there is but one thing reasonable to be done, and that is, for a man to make himself capable of the benefit as soon as he can, and thankfully to accept of it: but to excuse himself from accepting of the benefit offered, because he is not worthy of it, nor fit for it, nor never intends to be so, as if a man should desire to be excused from being happy because he is resolved to play
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the fool and to be miserable. So that whether our want of preparation be total, or only to some degree, it is every way unreasonable: if it be in the degree only, it ought not to hinder us from receiving the sacrament; if it be total, it ought to put us immediately upon removing the impediment, by making such preparation as is necessary to the due and worthy receiving of it. And this brings me to the

IV. Fourth and last thing I proposed, viz. what preparation of ourselves is necessary in order to the worthy receiving of this sacrament. Which I told you would give me occasion to explain the apostle's meaning in the last part of the text, *but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup*. I think it very clear from the occasion and circumstances of the apostle's discourse concerning the sacrament that he does not intend the examination of our state, whether we be christians or not, and sincerely resolved to continue so; and consequently that he does not here speak of our habitual preparation by the resolution of a good life. This he takes for granted, that they were christians and resolved to continue and persevere in their christian profession: but he speaks of their actual fitness and worthiness at that time when they came to receive the Lord's supper. And for the clearing of this matter, we must consider what it was that gave occasion to this discourse. At the 20th verse of this chapter he sharply reproves their irreverent and unsuitable carriage at the Lord's supper. They came to it very disorderly one before another. It was the custom of christians to meet at their feast of charity, in which they did communicate with great sobriety and temperance; and when that was ended they celebrated the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Now among the Corinthians this order was broken: the rich met and excluded the poor from this common feast. And after an irregular feast (one before another eating his own supper as he came) they went to the sacrament in great disorder; one was hungry, having eaten nothing at all; others were drunk, having eaten intemperately; and the poor were despised and neglected. This the

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apostle condemns as a great profanation of that solemn institution of the sacrament; at the participation whereof they behaved themselves with as little reverence as if they had been met at a common supper or feast. And this he calls *not discerning the LORD's body*, making no difference in their behaviour between the sacrament and a common meal: which irreverent and contemptuous carriage of theirs he calls *eating and drinking unworthily*: for which he pronounceth them *guilty of the body and blood of the LORD*, which were represented and commemorated in their *eating of that bread and drinking of that cup*. By which irreverent and contemptuous usage of the body and blood of our LORD, he tells them that they did incur the judgment of GOD; which he calls *eating and drinking their own judgment*. For that the word *αἰῶνις*, which our translators render damnation, does not here signify eternal condemnation, but a temporal judgment and chastisement in order to the prevention of eternal condemnation, is evident from what follows; *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself*; and then he says, *for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*: that is, for this irreverence of theirs GOD had sent among them several diseases, of which many had died. And then he adds, *for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*. If we would judge ourselves; whether this be meant of the publick censures of the church, or our private censuring of ourselves in order to our future amendment and reformation, is not certain. If of the latter, which I think most probable, then judging here is much the same with examining ourselves, ver. 28. And then the apostle's meaning is, that if we would censure and examine ourselves, so as to be more careful for the future, we should escape the judgment of GOD in these temporal punishments. *But when we are judged, we are chastened of the LORD, that we should not be condemned with the world*. But when we are judged; that is, when by neglecting thus to judge ourselves we provoke GOD to judge us; *we are chastened of the LORD, that we should not be condemned with the world*; that is, he inflicts these temporal judgments upon us to prevent our eternal

condemnation. Which plainly shews, that the judgment here spoken of is not eternal condemnation. And then he concludes, *Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat tarry for one another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto judgment*: where the apostle plainly shews both what was the crime of unworthy receiving, and the punishment of it. Their crime was, their irreverent and disorderly participation of the sacrament; and their punishment was, those temporal judgments which God inflicted upon them for this their contempt of the sacrament.

Now this being, I think, very plain; we are proportionably to understand the precept of examination of ourselves, *before we eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. But let a man examine himself*; that is, consider well with himself what a sacred action he is going about, and what behaviour becomes him when he is celebrating this sacrament instituted by our LORD in memorial of his body and blood, that is, of his death and passion: and if heretofore he have been guilty of any disorder and irreverence (such as the apostle here taxeth them withal) let him censure and judge himself for it, be sensible of and sorry for his fault, and be careful to avoid it for the future; and having thus *examined himself, let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup*. This, I think, is the plain sense of the apostle's discourse; and that if we attend to the scope and circumstances of it, it cannot well have any other meaning.

But some will say, is this all the preparation that is required to our worthy receiving of the sacrament, that we take care not to come drunk to it, nor to be guilty of any irreverence or disorder in the celebration of it? I answer in short, this was the particular unworthiness with which the apostle taxeth the Corinthians; and which he warns them to amend, as they desire to escape the judgments of God, such as they had already felt for this irreverent carriage of theirs, so unsuitable to the holy sacrament: he finds no other fault with them at present in this matter, though any other sort of irreverence will proportionably expose men to the like punishment. He says nothing here of their habitual preparation, by the
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sincere purpose and resolution of a good life answerable to the rules of the christian religion : this we may suppose he took for granted. However, it concerns the sacrament no more than it does prayer or any other religious duty. Not but that it is very true that none but those who do heartily embrace the christian religion, and are sincerely resolved to frame their lives according to the holy rules and precepts of it, are fit to communicate in this solemn acknowledgment and profession of it. So that it is a practice very much to be countenanced and encouraged, because it is of great use, for christians by way of preparation for the sacrament to examine themselves in a larger sense than in all probability the apostle here intended : I mean, to examine our past lives, and the actions of them, in order to a sincere repentance of all our errors and miscarriages, and to fix us in the steady purpose and resolution of a better life : particularly, when we expect to have the forgiveness of our sins sealed to us, we should lay aside all enmity and thoughts of revenge, and heartily forgive those that have offended us, and put in practice that universal love and charity which is represented to us by this holy communion. And to this purpose we are earnestly exhorted in the publick office of the communion by way of due preparation and disposition for it, *to repent us truly of our sins past, to amend our lives, and to be in perfect charity with all men, that so we may be meet partakers of those holy mysteries.*

And because this work of examining ourselves concerning our state and condition, and of exercising repentance towards God and charity towards men is incumbent upon us as we are christians, and can never be put in practice more seasonably and with greater advantage than when we are meditating of this sacrament, therefore besides our habitual preparation by repentance and the constant endeavours of a holy life, it is a very pious and commendable custom in christians before their coming to the sacrament to set apart some particular time for this work of examination. But how much time every person should allot to this purpose is matter of prudence ; and as it need not, so neither indeed can it be precisely determined. Some

have greater reason to spend more time upon this work than others; I mean those whose accounts are heavier, because they have long run upon the score and neglected themselves: and some also have more leisure and freedom for it, by reason of their easy condition and circumstances in the world: and therefore are obliged to allow a greater portion of time for the exercises of piety and devotion. In general, no man ought to do a work of so great moment and concernment slightly and perfunctorily. And in this, as in all other actions, the end is principally to be regarded. Now the end of examining ourselves is to understand our state and condition, and to reform whatever we find amiss in ourselves. And provided this end be obtained, the circumstances of the means are less considerable: whether more or less time be allowed to this work it matters not so much, as to make sure that the work be thoroughly done.

And I do on purpose speak thus cautiously in this matter, because some pious persons do perhaps err on the stricter hand, and are a little superstitious on that side; insomuch that unless they can gain so much time to set apart for a solemn preparation, they will refrain from the sacrament at that time; though otherwise they be habitually prepared. This I doubt not proceeds from a pious mind; but as the apostle says in another case about the sacrament, *shall I praise them in this? I praise them not.* For, provided there be no wilful neglect of due preparation, it is much better to come so prepared as we can, may I think it is our duty so to do, rather than to abstain upon this punctilio. For when all is done, the best preparation for the sacrament is the general care and endeavour of a good life: and he that is thus prepared may receive at any time when opportunity is offered, though he had no particular foresight of that opportunity. And I think in that case such a one shall do much better to receive than to refrain; because he is habitually prepared for the sacrament, though he had no time to make such actual preparation as he desired. And if this were not allowable how could ministers communicate with sick persons at all times, or persuade others to do it many times upon very short and sudden warning?

And indeed we cannot imagine that the primitive christians, who received the sacrament so frequently, that for ought appears to the contrary they judged it as essential and necessary a part of their publick worship as any other part of it whatsoever, even as their hymns and prayers, and reading and interpreting the word of GOD: I say, we cannot well conceive how they who celebrated it so constantly, could allot any more time for a solemn preparation for it, than they did for any other part of divine worship: and consequently, that the apostle when he bids the Corinthians examine themselves, could mean no more than that considering the nature and ends of this institution they should come to it with great reverence; and reflecting upon their former miscarriages in this matter, should be careful upon his admonition to avoid them for the future, and to amend what had been amiss: which to do, requires rather resolution and care than any long time of preparation.

I speak this, that devout persons may not be intangled in an apprehension of a greater necessity than really there is of a long and solemn preparation every time they receive the sacrament. The great necessity that lies upon men is to live as becomes christians, and then they can never be absolutely unprepared. Nay, I think this to be a very good preparation: and I see not why men should not be very well satisfied with it, unless they intend to make the same use of the sacrament that many of the papists do of confession and absolution, which is to quit with GOD once or twice a year, that so they may begin to sin again upon a new score.

But because the examination of ourselves is a thing so very useful, and the time which men are wont to set apart for their preparation for the sacrament is so advantageous an opportunity for the practice of it; therefore I cannot but very much commend those who take this occasion to search and try their ways, and to call themselves to a more solemn account of their actions. Because this ought to be done some time, and I know no fitter time for it than this. And perhaps some would never find time to recollect themselves and to take the condition

of their souls into serious consideration, were it not upon this solemn occasion.

The sum of what I have said is this, that supposing a person to be habitually prepared by a religious disposition of mind and the general course of a good life, this more solemn actual preparation is not always necessary: and it is better when there is an opportunity to receive without it, than not to receive at all. But the greater our actual preparation is, the better. For no man can examine himself too often, and understand the state of his soul too well, and exercise repentance, and renew the resolutions of a good life too frequently. And there is perhaps no fitter opportunity for the doing of all this, than when we approach the LORD's table, there to commemorate his death, and to renew our covenant with him to live as becomes the gospel.

All the Reflexion I shall now make upon this discourse, shall be from the consideration of what hath been said earnestly to excite all that profess and call themselves christians to a due preparation of themselves for this holy sacrament, and a frequent participation of it according to the intention of our LORD and SAVIOUR in the institution of it, and the undoubted practice of christians in the primitive and best times, when men had more devotion and fewer scruples about their duty.

If we do in good earnest believe that this sacrament was instituted by our LORD in remembrance of his dying love, we cannot but have a very high value and esteem for it upon that account. Methinks so often as we read in the institution of it those words of our dear LORD, *do this in remembrance of me*, and consider what he who said them did for us, this dying charge of our best friend should stick with us and make a strong impression upon our minds: especially if we add to these, those other words of his, not long before his death, *Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend; ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you*. It is a wonderful love which he hath expressed to us, and worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance. And all that he expects from us, by way of thankful acknowledgment,

is to celebrate the remembrance of it by the frequent participation of this blessed sacrament. And shall this charge, laid upon us by him who laid down his life for us, lay no obligation upon us to the solemn remembrance of that unparallel'd kindness which is the fountain of so many blessings and benefits to us? it is a sign that we have no great sense of the benefit when we are so unmindful of our benefactor as to forget him days without number. The obligation he hath laid upon us is so vastly great, not only beyond all requital but beyond all expression, that if he had commanded us some very grievous thing we ought with all readiness and cheerfulness in the world to have done it; how much more when he hath imposed upon us so easy a commandment, a thing of no burden but of immense benefit? when he hath only said to us, *eat O friends, and drink O beloved?* when he only invites us to his table, to the best and most delicious feast that we can partake of on this side heaven?

If we seriously believe the great blessings which are there exhibited to us and ready to be conferred upon us, we should be so far from neglecting them, that we should heartily thank God for every opportunity he offers to us of being made partakers of such benefits. When such a prize is put into our hands, shall we want hearts to make use of it? methinks we should long with David (who saw but a shadow of these blessings) to be satisfied with the good things of God's house, and to draw near his altar; and should cry out with him, *O when shall I come and appear before thee! my soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the LORD, and my flesh crieth out for the living God.* And if we had a just esteem of things, we should account it the greatest infelicity and judgment in the world to be debarred of this privilege, which yet we do deliberately and frequently deprive ourselves of.

We exclaim against the church of Rome with great impatience, and with a very just indignation, for robbing the people of half this blessed sacrament, and taking from them the cup of blessing, the cup of salvation; and yet we can patiently endure for some months, nay years, to exclude ourselves wholly from it. If no such great
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benefits and blessings belong to it, why do we complain of them for hindring us of any part of it? but if there do, why do we by our own neglect deprive ourselves of the whole?

In vain do we bemoan the decay of our graces, and our slow progress and improvement in christianity, whilst we wilfully despise the best means of our growth in goodness. Well do we deserve that GOD should send leanness into our souls, and make them to consume and pine away in perpetual doubting and trouble, if, when GOD himself doth spread so bountiful a table for us and set before us the bread of life, we will not come and feed upon it with joy and thankfulness.

S E R M O N XXVI.

A Discourse against Transubstantiation.

CONCERNING the sacrament of the LORD'S supper, one of the two great positive institutions of the christian religion, there are two main points of difference between us and the church of Rome. One about the doctrine of Transubstantiation; in which they think, but are not certain, that they have the scripture and the words of our SAVIOUR on their side: the other, about the administration of this sacrament to the people in both kinds; in which we are sure that we have the scripture and our SAVIOUR'S institution on our side; and that so plainly that our adversaries themselves do not deny it.

Of the first of these I shall now treat, and endeavour to shew against the church of Rome, that in this sacrament there is no substantial change made of the elements of bread and wine into the natural body and blood of CHRIST; that body which was born of the virgin Mary,

Mary, and suffered upon the cross; for so they explain that hard word Transubstantiation.

Before I engage in this argument, I cannot but observe what an unreasonable task we are put upon, by the bold confidence of our adversaries, to dispute a matter of sense; which is one of those things about which Aristotle hath long since pronounced there ought to be no dispute.

It might well seem strange if any man should write a book to prove that an egg is not an elephant, and that a musket-bullet is not a pike: it is every whit as hard a case, to be put to maintain by a long discourse, that what we see and handle and taste to be bread is bread, and not the body of a man; and what we see and taste to be wine is wine, and not blood: and if this evidence may not pass for sufficient without any farther proof, I do not see why any man, that hath confidence enough to do so, may not deny any thing to be what all the world sees it is; or affirm any thing to be what all the world sees it is not; and this without all possibility of being farther confuted. So that the business of Transubstantiation is not a controversy of scripture against scripture, or of reason against reason, but of downright impudence against the plain meaning of scripture, and all the sense and reason of mankind.

It is a most self-evident falshood; and there is no doctrine or proposition in the world that is of itself more evidently true, than Transubstantiation is evidently false: and yet if it were possible to be true, it would be the most ill-natured and pernicious truth in the world, because it would suffer nothing else to be true; it is like the Roman-catholick church, which will needs be the whole christian church, and will allow no other society of christians to be any part of it: so Transubstantiation, if it be true at all, it is all truth, and nothing else is true; for it cannot be true unless our senses, and the senses of all mankind be deceived about their proper objects; and if this be true and certain, then nothing else can be so; for if we be not certain of what we see, we can be certain of nothing.

And

And yet notwithstanding all this, there are a company of men in the world so abandoned and given up by God to the efficacy of delusion as in good earnest to believe this gross and palpable error, and to impose the belief of it upon the christian world under no less penalties than of temporal death and eternal damnation. And therefore, to undeceive, if possible, these deluded souls, it will be necessary to examine the pretended grounds of so false a doctrine, and to lay open the monstrous absurdity of it.

And in the handling of this argument, I shall proceed in this plain method.

I. I shall consider the pretended grounds and reasons of the church of Rome for this doctrine.

II. I shall produce our objections against it. And if I can shew that there is no tolerable ground for it, and that there are invincible objections against it, then every man is not only in reason excused from believing this doctrine, but hath great cause to believe the contrary.

I. First, I will consider the pretended grounds and reasons of the church of Rome for this doctrine. Which must be one or more of these five. Either 1st, the authority of scripture. Or 2dly, the perpetual belief of this doctrine in the christian church, as an evidence that they always understood and interpreted our SAVIOUR's words, *this is my body*, in this sense. Or 3dly, the authority of the present church to make and declare new articles of faith. Or 4thly, the absolute necessity of such a change as this in the sacrament, to the comfort and benefit of those who receive this sacrament. Or 5thly, to magnify the power of the priest in being able to work so great a miracle.

1st, They pretend for this doctrine the authority of scripture in those words of our SAVIOUR, *this is my body*. Now to shew the insufficiency of this pretence, I shall endeavour to make good these two things.

1. That there is no necessity of understanding those words of our SAVIOUR in the sense of Transubstantiation.

2. That

2. That there is a great deal of reason, nay that it is very absurd and unreasonable, not to understand them otherwise.

First, That there is no necessity to understand those words of our SAVIOUR in the sense of Transubstantiation. If there be any, it must be from one of these two reasons. Either because there are no figurative expressions in scripture, which I think no man ever yet said: or else, because a sacrament admits of no figures; which would be very absurd for any man to say, since it is of the very nature of a sacrament to represent and exhibit some invisible grace and benefit by an outward sign and figure: and especially since it cannot be denied, but that in the institution of this very sacrament our SAVIOUR useth figurative expressions, and several words which cannot be taken strictly and literally. When he gave the cup he said, *This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins.* Where first, the cup is put for the wine contained in the cup; or else, if the words be literally taken, so as to signify a substantial change, it is not of the wine but of the cup; and that, not into the blood of CHRIST but into the new testament or new covenant in his blood. Besides, that his blood is said then to be shed, and his body to be broken, which was not 'till his passion, which followed the institution and first celebration of this sacrament.

But that there is no necessity to understand our SAVIOUR's words in the sense of Transubstantiation, I will make the plain concession of a great number of the most learned Writers of the church of Rome in this controversy. (a) Bellarmine, (b) Suarez and (c) Vasquez do acknowledge Scotus the great schoolman to have said, that this doctrine cannot be evidently proved from scripture: and Bellarmine grants this not to be improbable; and Suarez and Vasquez acknowledge (d) Durandus to

(a) de Euch. l. 3. c. 23. (b) in 3. dist. 49. Qu. 75. art. 2. (c) in 3. part. disp. 180. Qu. 75. art. 2. c. 15. (d) in Sent. l. 4. dist. 11. Qu. 1. n. 15.

have

have said as much. (e) Ocham, another famous schoolman, says expressly, *that the doctrine which holds the substance of the bread and wine to remain after consecration, is neither repugnant to reason nor scripture.* (f) Petrus ab Alliaco, cardinal of Cambray, says plainly, *that the doctrine of the substance of bread and wine remaining after consecration is more easy and free from absurdity, more rational, and no ways repugnant to the authority of scripture; nay more, that for the other doctrine, viz. of Transubstantiation, there is no evidence in scripture.* (g) Gabriel Biel, another great schoolman and divine of their church, freely declares, *that as to any thing exprest in the canon of the scriptures, a man may believe that the substance of bread and wine doth remain after consecration: and therefore he resolves the belief of Transubstantiation into some other revelation, besides scripture, which he supposeth the church had about it.* Cardinal (b) Cajetan confesseth, *that the gospel doth no where exprest that the bread is changed into the body of CHRIST; that we have this from the authority of the church, nay he goes farther, that there is nothing in the gospel which enforceth any man to understand these words of CHRIST, this is my body, in a proper and not a metaphorical sense; but the church having understood them in a proper sense, they are to be so explained, which words in the Roman edition of Cajetan are expunged by order of Pope (i) Pius V. Cardinal (k) Contarenus, and (l) Melchior Canus one of the best and most judicious writers that church ever had, reckon this doctrine among those which are not so expressly found in scripture. I will add but one more of great authority in the church, and a reputed martyr, (m) Fisher bishop of Rochester, who ingenuously confesseth that in the words of the institution there is not one word from whence the true presence of the*

(e) In 4. Sent. Q. 5. & Quodl. 4. Q. 3.

4. Sent. Q. 6. art. 2.

(g) in canon. Miss. Lect. 4.

(b) in Aquin. 3. part. Q. 75. art. 1.

(i) Ægid. C.

nic. de Sacram. Q. 75. art. 1. n. 13.

(k) de Sacram.

l. 2. c. 3.

(l) Loc. Theolog. l. 3. c. 3.

(m) co

tra captiv. Babylon. c. 10. n. 2.

flesh and blood of CHRIST in our mass can be proved. So that we need not much contend that this doctrine hath no certain foundation in Scripture, when this is so fully and frankly acknowledged by our adversaries themselves.

Secondly, if there be no necessity of understanding our SAVIOUR's words in the sense of Transubstantiation, I am sure there is a great deal of reason to understand them otherwise. Whether we consider the like expressions in scripture; as where our SAVIOUR says he is the door and the true vine (which the church of Rome would mightily have triumph'd in, had it been said *this is my true body.*) And so likewise where the church is said to be CHRIST's body; and the rock which followed the Israelites to be CHRIST, 1 Cor. x. 4. *They drank of that rock which followed them, and that rock was CHRIST:* all which, and innumerable more like expressions in scripture, every man understands in a figurative, and not in a strictly literal and absurd sense. And it is very well known, that in the hebrew language things are commonly said to be that which they do signify and represent; and there is not in that language a more proper and usual way of expressing a thing to signify so and so, than to say that it is so and so. Thus Joseph expounded Pharaoh's dream to him, Gen. xli. 26. says, *the seven good kine are seven years, and the seven good ears of corn are seven years,* that is, they signified or represented seven years of plenty; and so Pharaoh understood him, and so would any man of sense understand the like expressions: nor do I believe that any sensible man who had never heard of Transubstantiation being grounded upon these words of our SAVIOUR, *this is my body,* would upon reading the institution of the sacrament in the gospel ever have imagin'd any such thing to be meant by our SAVIOUR in those words; but would have understood his meaning to have been *this bread signifies my body, this cup signifies my blood; and this which you see me now do, do ye hereafter for a memorial of me:* but surely it would never have entred into any man's mind to have thought that our SAVIOUR did literally hold himself in his hand, and give away himself from himself with his

own hands. Or whether we compare these words of our SAVIOUR with the ancient form of the passover used by the Jews from Ezra's time, as (n) Justin Martyr tells us, αὐτο τὸ πάχα ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ καταφυγὴ ἡμῶν, *this passover is our SAVIOUR and our refuge*: not that they believed the paschal lamb to be substantially changed either into GOD their SAVIOUR who delivered them out of the land of Egypt, or into the MESSIAS the SAVIOUR whom they expected, and who was signified by it: but this lamb which they did eat did represent to them and put them in mind of that salvation which GOD wrought for their fathers in Egypt, when by the slaying of a lamb and sprinkling the blood of it upon their doors their first-born were passed over and spared; and did likewise foreshew the salvation of the MESSIAS, *the lamb of GOD that was to take away the sins of the world.*

And nothing is more common in all languages than to give the name of the thing signified to the sign: as the delivery of a deed or writing under hand and seal is call'd a conveyance or making over of such an estate, and it is really so; not the delivery of mere wax and parchment, but the conveyance of a real estate; as truly and really to all effects and purposes of law, as if the very material houses and lands themselves could be and were actually delivered into my hands: in like manner the names of the things themselves made over to us in the new covenant of the gospel between GOD and man, are given to the signs or seals of that covenant. By baptism christians are said to be *made partakers of the HOLY GHOST*, Heb. vi. 4. And by the sacrament of the LORD's supper we are said to communicate, or to be made partakers of the body of CHRIST which was broken, and of his blood which was shed for us, that is, of the real benefit of his death and passion. And thus St. Paul speaks of this sacrament, 1 Cor. x. 16. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of CHRIST? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the*

(n) Dialog. cum Tryp. p. 297. Edit. Paris. 1639.

body of CHRIST? But still it is bread, and he still calls it so, ver. 17. *for we being many, are one bread and one body; for we are partakers of that one bread.* The church of Rome might, if they pleased, as well argue from hence, that all christians are substantially changed first into bread, and then into the natural body of CHRIST by their participation of the sacrament, because they are said thereby to be *one bread and one body.* And the same apostle in the next chapter, after he had spoken of the consecration of the elements, still calls them the bread and the cup, in three verses together, *As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup,* ver. 26. *Whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the LORD unworthily,* ver. 27. *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup,* ver. 28. And our SAVIOUR himself when he had said *this is my blood of the new testament,* immediately adds, Matth. xxvi. 19. *but I say unto you, I will not henceforth drink of this fruit of the vine, until I drink it new with you in my FATHER'S kingdom,* that is, not 'till after his resurrection, which was the first step of his exaltation into the kingdom given him by his FATHER, when the scripture tells us he did eat and drink with his disciples. But that which I observe from our SAVIOUR'S words is, that after the consecration of the cup and the delivering of it to his disciples to drink of it, he tells them that he would thenceforth drink no more of that fruit of the vine, which he had now drank with them, 'till after his resurrection. From whence it is plain that it was the fruit of the vine, real wine, which our SAVIOUR drank of, and communicated to his disciples in the sacrament.

Besides, if we consider that he celebrated this sacrament before his passion, it is impossible these words should be understood literally of the natural body and blood of CHRIST; because it was his body broken and his blood shed which he gave to his disciples, which if we understand literally of his natural body broken and his blood shed, then these words, *this is my body which is broken, and this is my blood which is shed,* could not be true, because his body was then whole and unbroken,

and his blood not then shed ; nor could it be a propitiatory sacrifice (as they affirm this sacrament to be) unless they will say that propitiation was made before CHRIST suffered : and it is likewise impossible that the disciples should understand these words literally, because they not only plainly saw that what he gave them was bread and wine, but they saw likewise as plainly that it was not his body which was given, but his body which gave that which was given ; not his body broken and his blood shed, because they saw him alive at that very time, and beheld his body whole and unpierc'd ; and therefore they could not understand these words literally : if they did, can we imagine that the disciples, who upon all other occasions were so full of questions and objections, should make no difficulty of this matter ? nor so much as ask our SAVIOUR, how can these things be ? that they should not tell him, we see this to be bread and that to be wine, and we see thy body to be distinct from both ; we see thy body not broken, and thy blood not shed.

From all which it must needs be very evident to any man that will impartially consider things, how little reason there is to understand those words of our SAVIOUR, *this is my body, and this is my blood*, in the sense of Transubstantiation : nay, on the contrary, that there is very great reason and an evident necessity to understand them otherwise. I proceed to shew,

2dly, That this doctrine is not grounded upon the perpetual belief of the christian church, which the church of Rome vainly pretends as an evidence that the church did always understand and interpret our SAVIOUR's words in this sense.

To manifest the groundlessness of this pretence, I shall, 1. shew by plain testimony of the fathers in several ages, that this doctrine was not the belief of the ancient christian church. 2. I shall shew the time and occasion of its coming in, and by what degrees it grew up and was established in the Roman Church. 3. I shall answer their great pretended demonstration, that this always was and must have been the constant belief of the christian church.

1. I shall shew by plain testimonies of the fathers in several ages, for above five hundred years after CHRIST, that this doctrine was not the belief of the ancient christian church. I deny not but that the fathers do, and that with great reason, very much magnify the wonderful mystery and efficacy of this sacrament, and frequently speak of a great supernatural change made by the divine benediction; which we also readily acknowledge. They say indeed, that the elements of bread and wine do by the divine blessing become to us the body and blood of CHRIST: but they likewise say that the names of the things signified are given to the signs; that the bread and wine do still remain in their proper nature and substance, and that they are turn'd into the substance of our bodies; that the body of CHRIST in the sacrament is not his natural body, but the sign and figure of it; not that body which was crucified, nor that blood which was shed upon the cross; and that it is impious to understand the eating of the flesh of the SON of man and drinking his blood literally; all which are directly opposite to the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and utterly inconsistent with it. I will select but some few testimonies of many things which I might bring to this purpose.

I begin with Justin Martyr, who says expressly, *that (o) our blood and flesh are nourished by the conversion of that food which we receive in the eucharist*: but that cannot be the natural body and blood of CHRIST, for no man will say that that is converted into the nourishment of our bodies.

The second is (p) Irenæus, who speaking of this sacrament says, *that the bread which is from the earth, receiving the divine invocation, is now no longer common bread, but the eucharist (or sacrament) consisting of two things, the one earthly, the other heavenly*. He says it is no longer common bread, but after invocation or consecration it becomes the sacrament, that is, bread sanctified, consisting of two things, an earthly and an heavenly; the earthly thing is bread, and the heavenly is the divine blessing

(o) Apol. 2. p. 98. Edit. Paris. 1636. (p) Lib. 4. c. 24.

which by the invocation or consecration is added to it. And (q) *elsewhere he hath this passage, when therefore the cup that is mix'd (that is of wine and water) and the bread that is broken receives the word of GOD, it becomes the eucharist of the blood and body of CHRIST, of which the substance of our flesh is increased and consists; but if that which we receive in the sacrament do nourish our bodies, it must be bread and wine, and not the natural body and blood of CHRIST. There is another remarkable testimony of Irenæus, which though it be not now extant in those works of his which remain, yet hath been preserv'd by (r) Oecumenius, and it is this; when (says he) the greeks had taken some servants of the christian catechumeni (that is, such as had not been admitted to the sacrament) and afterwards urged them by violence to tell them some of the secrets of the christians, these servants having nothing to say that might gratify those who offered violence to them, except only that they had heard from their masters, that the divine communion was the blood and body of CHRIST, they thinking that it was really blood and flesh, declar'd as much to those that questioned them. The greeks taking this as if it were really done by the christians, discovered it to others of the greeks; who hereupon put Sanctus and Blandina to the torture to make them confess it. To whom Blandina boldly answered, How could they endure to do this, who by way of exercise (or abstinence) do not eat that flesh which may lawfully be eaten? By which it appears that this which they would have charg'd upon christians, as if they had literally eaten the flesh and blood of CHRIST in the sacrament, was a false accusation which these martyrs denied, saying they were so far from that, that they for their part did not eat any flesh at all.*

The next is Tertullian, who proves against Marcion the heretick, that the body of our SAVIOUR was not a mere phantasm and appearance, but a real body, because the sacrament is a figure and image of his body; and if there be an image of his body he must have a real body,

(q) Lib. 5. c. 31. (r) Comment. in 1 Pet. c. 3.

other-

otherwise the sacrament would be an image of an image. His words are these, (s) *the bread which our SAVIOUR took and distributed to his disciples he made his own body, saying, this is my body, that is, the image or figure of my body. But it could not have been the figure of his body, if there had not been a true and real body.* And arguing against the scepticks who denied the certainty of sense, he useth this argument: that if we question our senses, we may doubt whether our blessed SAVIOUR were not deceived in what he heard, and saw, and touched. (t) *He might (says he) be deceived in the voice from heaven, in the smell of the ointment with which he was anointed against his burial, and in the taste of the wine which he consecrated in remembrance of his blood.* So that it seems we are to trust our senses, even in the matter of the sacrament: and if that be true, the doctrine of Transubstantiation is certainly false.

Origen in his (u) comment on Matth. xv. speaking of the sacrament hath this passage, *That food which is sanctified by the word of GOD and prayer, as to that of it which is material, goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught, which none will surely say of the body of CHRIST.* And afterwards he adds by way of explication, *it is not the matter of the bread, but the words which are spoken over it, which profiteth him that worthily eateth the LORD: and this (he says) he had spoken concerning the typical and symbolical body.* So that the matter of bread remaineth in the sacrament, and this Origen calls the typical and symbolical body of CHRIST; and it is not the natural body of CHRIST which is there eaten, for the food eaten in the sacrament, as to that of it which is material, goeth into the belly and is cast out into the draught. This testimony is so very plain in the cause, that Sextus Senensis suspects this place of Origen was depraved by the hereticks. Cardinal Perron is contented to allow it to be Origen's, but rejects his testimony because he was accused of heresy by some of the fathers, and says he talks

(s) Advers. Marcionem, l. 4. p. 571. Edit. Rigal. Paris, 1634. (t) Lib. de Anima. p. 319. (u) Edit. Quetii.

like

like a heretick in this place. So that with much ado this testimony is yielded to us. The same father in his (x) homilies upon Leveticus speaks thus, *There is also in the new testament a letter which kills him who doth not spiritually understand those things which are said; for if we take according to the letter that which is said, EXCEPT YE EAT MY FLESH AND DRINK MY BLOOD, this letter kills.* And this is also a killing testimony, and not to be answered but in Cardinal Perron's way, by saying he talks like a heretick.

St. Cyprian hath a whole epistle (y) to Cecilius, against those who gave the communion in water only without wine mingled with it; and his main argument against them is this, *that the blood of CHRIST with which we are redeemed and quickened cannot seem to be in the cup, when there is no wine in the cup by which the blood of CHRIST is represented: and afterwards he says, that contrary to the evangelical and apostolical doctrine water was in some places offered (or given) in the LORD's cup, which (says he) alone cannot express (or represent) the blood of CHRIST.* And lastly he tells us, *that by water the people is understood, by wine the blood of CHRIST is shewn (or represented) but when in the cup water is mingled with wine the people is united to CHRIST.* So that according to this argument wine in the sacramental cup is no otherwise changed into the blood of CHRIST, than the water mixed with it is changed into the people which are said to be united to CHRIST.

I omit many others, and pass to St. Austin in the fourth age after CHRIST. And I the rather insist upon his testimony, because of his eminent esteem and authority in the Latin church; and he also calls *the element of the sacrament the figure and sign of CHRIST's body and blood.* In his book against Adamantus the Manichee we have this expression, (z) *Our LORD did not doubt to say, this is my body, when he gave the sign of his body.* And in his explication of the third Psalm, speaking of Judas whom our

(x) Cap. 10. (y) Ep. 65. (z) Aug. Tom. 6.
p. 187. Edit. Basil. 1596.

LORD admitted to his last supper, in which (says he) (a) *he commended and delivered to his disciples the figure of his body*; language which would now be censured for heresy in the church of Rome. Indeed he was never accused of heresy, as cardinal Perron says Origen was, but he talks as like one as Origen himself. And in his comment on the 98th Psalm, speaking of the offence which the disciples took at that saying of our SAVIOUR, *Except ye eat the flesh of the SON of man and drink his blood, &c.* he brings in our SAVIOUR speaking thus to them, (b) *Ye must understand spiritually, what I have said unto you; you are not to eat this body which you see, and to drink that blood which shall be shed by those that shall crucify me. I have commended a certain sacrament to you, which being spiritually understood will give you life.* What more opposite to the doctrine of Transubstantiation, than that the disciples were not to eat that body of CHRIST which they saw, nor to drink that blood which was shed upon the cross, but all this was to be understood spiritually and according to the nature of a sacrament? for that body he tells us is not here but in heaven, in his comment upon these words, *Me ye have not always.* (c) *He speaks (says he) of the presence of his body: ye shall have me according to my providence, according to majesty and invisible grace: but according to the flesh which the word assumed, according to that which was born of the virgin Mary, ye shall not have me: therefore because he conversed with his disciples forty days, he is ascended up into heaven, and is not here.*

In his 23d epistle; (d) *If the sacrament (says he) had not some resemblance of those things whereof they are sacraments, they would not be sacraments at all: but from this resemblance they take for the most part the names of the things which they represent. Therefore as the sacrament of the body of CHRIST is in some manner or sense CHRIST's body, and the sacrament of his blood is the blood of CHRIST; so the sacrament of faith (meaning baptism) is faith. Upon*

(a) Enarrat. in Psal. Tom. 8. p. 16. (b) Id. Tom. 9. p. 1105. (c) Id. Tract. 50. in Joan. (d) Id. Tom. 2. p. 93.

which words of St. Austin, there is this remarkable gloss in their own canon law, (e) *The heavenly sacrament which truly represents the flesh of CHRIST is called the body of CHRIST; but improperly: whence it is said, that after a manner, but not according to the truth of the thing, but the mystery of the thing signified; so that the meaning is, it is called the body of CHRIST, that is, it signifies the body of CHRIST.* And if this be St. Austin's meaning, I am sure no Protestant can speak more plainly against Transubstantiation. And in the ancient canon of the mass, before it was changed in compliance with this new doctrine, it is expressly called a sacrament, a sign, an image and a figure of CHRIST's body. To which I will add that remarkable passage of St. Austin cited by (f) Gratian, *That as we receive the similitude of his death in baptism, so we may also receive the likeness of his flesh and blood; that so neither may truth be wanting in the sacrament, nor pagans have occasion to make us ridiculous for drinking the blood of one that was slain.*

I will mention but one testimony more of this father, but so clear a one as it is impossible any man in his wits that had believed Transubstantiation could have uttered. It is in his treatise (g) *de doctrina christiana*; where laying down several rules for the right understanding of scripture, he gives this for one. *If (says he) the speech be a precept forbidding some heinous wickedness or crime, or commanding us to do good, it is not figurative; but if it seem to command any heinous wickedness or crime, or to forbid that which is profitable or beneficial to others, it is figurative. For example, except ye eat the flesh of the SON of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you: this seems to command a heinous wickedness and crime, therefore it is a figure, commanding us to communicate of the passion of our LORD, and with delight and advantage to lay up in our memory that his flesh was crucified and wounded for us.* So that, according to St. Austin's best skill in interpreting scripture, the literal eating of the flesh of CHRIST and

(e) De Consecrat. dist. 2. Hoc est. (f) De Consecrat. dist. 2. Sect. Utrum. (g) Lib. 5. Tom. 3. p. 53.

drink-

drinking his blood would have been a great impiety; and therefore the expression is to be understood figuratively: not as cardinal Perron would have it, only in opposition to the eating of his flesh and blood in the gross appearance of flesh and blood, but to the real eating of his natural body and blood under any appearance whatsoever: for St. Austin doth not say, this is a figurative speech wherein we are commanded really to feed upon the natural body and blood of CHRIST under the species of bread and wine, as the cardinal would understand him; for then the speech would be literal and not figurative: but he says, this is a figurative speech wherein we are commanded spiritually to feed upon the remembrance of his passion.

To these I will add but three or four testimonies more in the two following ages.

The first shall be of Theodoret, who speaking of that (b) prophecy of Jacob concerning our SAVIOUR, *he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes*, hath these words, (i) *as we call the mystical fruit of the vine (that is, the wine in the sacrament) after consecration the blood of the LORD, so he (viz. Jacob) calls the blood of the true vine (viz. of CHRIST) the blood of the grape*: but the blood of CHRIST is not literally and properly but only figuratively the blood of the grape, in the same sense as he is said to be the true vine; and therefore the wine in the sacrament after consecration is in like manner not literally and properly but figuratively the blood of CHRIST. And he explains this afterwards, saying, *that our SAVIOUR changed the names, and gave to his body the name of the symbol or sign, and to that symbol or sign the name of his body*; thus when he had call'd himself the wine, he call'd the symbol or sign his blood; so that in the same sense that he call'd himself the vine, he call'd the wine, which is the symbol of his blood, his blood: For (says he) *he would have those who partake of the divine mysteries not to attend to the nature of the things which are seen, but by the change of names to believe the change which is made by grace*; for he who call'd that which by nature is a body, wheat and bread, and again likewise call'd him-

self

(b) Gen. xlix. 11

(i) Dialog. 1.

self the wine, he honour'd the symbols with the name of his body and blood; not changing nature, but adding grace to nature. Where you see he says expressly, that when he call'd the symbols or elements of the sacrament, viz. bread and wine, his body and blood, he made no change in the nature of the things, only added grace to nature, that is, by the divine grace and blessing he raised them to a spiritual and supernatural virtue and efficacy.

The second is of the same Theodoret, in his second dialogue between a catholick under the name of Orthodoxus, and an heretick under the name of Eranistes; who maintaining that the humanity of CHRIST was changed into the substance of divinity (which was the heresy of Eutyches), he illustrates the matter by this similitude. *As (says he) the symbols of the LORD's body and blood are one thing before the invocation of the priest, but after the invocation are changed and become another thing; so the body of our LORD after his ascension is changed into the divine substance.* But what says the catholick Orthodoxus to this? why, he talks just like one of cardinal Perron's hereticks: *Thou art (says he) caught in thine own net; because the mystical symbols after consecration do not pass out of their own nature: for they remain in their former substance, figure and appearance, and may be seen and handled even as before.* He does not only deny the outward figure and appearance of the symbols to be chang'd, but the nature and substance of them, even in the proper and strictest sense of the word substance; and it was necessary so to do, otherwise he had not given a pertinent answer to the similitude urg'd against him.

The next is one of their own popes, Gelasius, who brings the same instance against the Eutychians; (k) *Surely (says he) the sacraments which we receive of the body and blood of our LORD are a divine thing, so that by them we are made partakers of a divine nature, and yet it ceaseth not to be the substance or nature of bread and wine; and certainly the image and resemblance of CHRIST's body and blood are celebrated in the action of the mysteries, that is, in the sacrament.* To make this instance of any force

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(k) Biblioth. Patr. tom. 4.

against the Eutychians, who held that the body of CHRIST upon his ascension ceased, and was changed into the substance of his divinity, it was necessary to deny that there was any substantial change in the sacrament of bread and wine into the body and blood of CHRIST, So that here is an infallible authority, one of their own popes, expressly against Transubstantiation.

The last testimony I shall produce is of Facundus an African bishop, who lived in the 6th century. Upon occasion of justifying an expression of one who had said, that CHRIST also received the adoption of sons, he reasons thus, (l) CHRIST vouchsafed to receive the sacrament of adoption both when he was circumcised and baptised: and the sacrament of adoption may be called adoption, as the sacrament of his body and blood, which is in the consecrated bread and cup, is by us called his body and blood: not that the bread (says he) is properly his body and the cup his blood, but because they contain in them the mysteries of his body and blood; hence also our LORD himself called the blessed bread and cup which he gave to his disciples his body and blood. Can any man after this believe, that it was then, and had ever been, the universal and received doctrine of the christian church, that the bread and wine in the sacrament are substantially changed into the proper and natural body and blood of CHRIST?

By these plain testimonies which I have produced, and I might have brought a great many more to the same purpose, it is I think evident beyond all denial, that Transubstantiation hath not been the perpetual belief of the christian church. And this likewise is acknowledged by many great and learned men of the Roman church. (m) Scotus acknowledgeth that this doctrine was not always thought necessary to be believed, but that the necessity of believing it was consequent to that declaration of the church made in the council of Lateran under pope Innocent III. And (n) Durandus freely discovers his inclination

(l) Facund. p. 144. edit. Paris. 1676. (m) In Sent.

4. dist. 11. q. 3.

(n) In Sent. l. 4. dist. 11.

q. 1. n. 15.

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to have believed the contrary, if the church had not by that determination obliged men to believe it. (o) Tonsil bishop of Durham also yields that before the Lateran council men were at liberty as to the manner of CHRIST's presence in the sacrament. And (p) Erasmus, who lived and died in the communion of the Roman church, and than whom no man was better read in the ancient fathers, doth confess, that it was late before the church defined Transubstantiation, unknown to the ancients both name and thing. And (q) Alphonsus à Castro says plainly, that concerning the Transubstantiation of the bread into the body of CHRIST, there is seldom any mention in the ancient writers. And who can imagine that these learned men would have granted the ancient church and fathers to have been so much strangers to this doctrine, had they thought it to have been the perpetual belief of the church? I shall now in the

Second place, give an account of the particular time and occasion of the coming in of this doctrine, and by what steps and degrees it grew up and was advanced into an article of faith in the Romish church. The doctrine of the corporeal presence of CHRIST was first started upon occasion of the dispute about the worship of images, in opposition whereto the synod of Constantinople about the year 750 did argue thus, That our LORD having left us no other image of himself but the sacrament, in which the substance of bread is the image of his body, we ought to make no other image of our LORD. In answer to this argument the second Council of Nice, in the year 787, did declare, that the sacrament after consecration is not the image and anti-type of CHRIST's body and blood, but is properly his body and blood. So that the corporeal presence of the body of CHRIST in the sacrament, was first brought in to support the stupid worship of images: and indeed it could never have come in upon a more proper occasion, nor have been applied to a fitter purpose.

(o) De Euchar. l. 1. p. 146. (p) In 1 Epist. ad Corinth. c. 7. citante etiam Salmerone, Tom. 9. Tract. 16. p. 108. (q) De Hæres. l. 8.

And

And here I cannot but take notice how well this agrees with (r) Bellarmine's observation, *that none of the ancients who wrote of heresies, hath put this error (viz. of denying Transubstantiation) in his catalogue; nor did any of the ancients dispute against this error for the first 600 years.* Which is very true, because there could be no occasion then to dispute against those who denied Transubstantiation, since, as I have shewn, this doctrine was not in being, unless among the Eutychian Hereticks, for the first 600 years and more. But (s) Bellarmine goes on and tells us, *that the first who call'd in question the truth of the body of the LORD in the eucharist were the ICONOMACHI (the opposers of images) after the year 700, in the council of Constantinople; for these said there was one image of CHRIST instituted by CHRIST himself, viz. the bread and wine in the eucharist, which represents the body and blood of CHRIST: wherefore from that time the Greek writers often admonish us that the eucharist is not the figure or image of the body of the LORD, but his true body, as appears from the seventh Synod; which agrees most exactly with the account which I have given of the first rise of this doctrine, which began with the corporeal presence of CHRIST in the sacrament, and afterwards proceeded to Transubstantiation.*

And as this was the first occasion of introducing this doctrine among the Greeks, so in the Latin or Roman church Paschasius Radbertus, first a monk, and afterwards abbot of Corbey, was the first broacher of in it the year 818.

And for this, besides the evidence of history, we have the acknowledgment of two very eminent persons in the church of Rome, Bellarmine and Sirmondus, who do in effect confess that this Paschasius was the first who wrote to purpose upon this argument. (t) Bellarmine in these words, *This author was the first who hath seriously and copiously written concerning the truth of CHRIST's body and blood in the eucharist: and (u) Sirmondus in these, He so first explained the genuine sense of the catholick church,*

(r) De Eucharist. l. i. c. i.
Scriptor. Eccles.

(s) Ibid.

(t) De

(u) In vita Pascaſii.

that he opened the way to the rest, who afterwards in great numbers wrote upon the same argument: but though Sirmondus is pleased to say that he only first explained the sense of the catholick church in this point, yet it is very plain from the records of that age which are left to us, that this was the first time that this doctrine was broached in the Latin church; and it met with great opposition in that age, as I shall have occasion hereafter to shew. For Rabanus Maurus archbishop of Mentz, about the year 847, reciting the very words of Paschasius wherein he had delivered this doctrine, hath this remarkable passage concerning the novelty of it; (x) *Some, says he, of late, not having a right opinion concerning the sacrament of the body and blood of our LORD, have said that this is the body and blood of our LORD, which was born of the virgin Mary, and in which our LORD suffered upon the cross, and rose from the dead: which error* (says he) *we have opposed with all our might.* From whence it is plain, by the testimony of one of the greatest and most learned bishops of that age, and of eminent reputation for piety, that what is now the very doctrine of the church of Rome concerning the sacrament, was then esteem'd an error broach'd by some particular persons, but was far from being the generally receiv'd doctrine of that age. Can any one think it possible, that so eminent a person in the church both for piety and learning, could have condemn'd this doctrine as an error and a novelty, had it been the general doctrine of the christian church, not only in that but in all former ages; and no censure pass'd upon him for that which is now the great burning article in the church of Rome, and esteem'd by them one of the greatest and most pernicious heresies.

Afterwards in the year 1059, when Berengarius in France and Germany had rais'd a fresh opposition against this doctrine, he was compell'd to recant it by pope Nicholas and the council at Rome, in these words, (y) *That the bread and wine which are set upon the altar, after the consecration*

(x) Epist. ad Heribaldum, c. 33. (y) Gratian de Consecrat. distinct. 2. Lanfranc. de corp. & sang. Domini, c. 5. Guil. Mund. de sacram. Algar. de sacram. l. 1. c. 19.

consecration are not only the sacrament, but the true body and blood of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; and are sensibly, not only in the sacrament, but in truth, handled and broken by the hands of the priest, and ground or bruised by the teeth of the faithful. But it seems the pope and his council were not then skilful enough to express themselves rightly in this matter; for the gloss upon the canon law says expressly, (x) *That unless we understand these words of BERENGARIUS (that is in truth of the pope and his council) in a sound sense, we shall fall into a greater bere-ly than that of BERENGARIUS; for we do not make parts of the body of CHRIST. The meaning of which gloss I cannot imagine, unless it be this, that the body of CHRIST, though it be in truth broken, yet it is not broken into parts, (for we do not make parts of the body of CHRIST) but into wholes: now this new way of breaking a body, not into parts but into wholes, (which in good earnest is the doctrine of the church of Rome) though to them that are able to believe Transubstantiation, it may for any thing I know appear to be sound sense, yet to us that cannot believe so, it appears to be solid nonsense.*

About twenty years after, in the year 1079, pope Gregory VII. began to be sensible of this absurdity; and therefore in another council at Rome made Berengarius to recant in another form, viz. (a) *That the bread and wine which are placed upon the altar, are substantially changed into the true and proper and quickning flesh and blood of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and after consecration are the true body of CHRIST, which was born of the virgin, and which being offered for the salvation of the world did hang upon the cross, and sits at the right hand of the FATHER.*

So that from the first starting of this doctrine in the second council of Nice in the year 787, till the council under pope Gregory VII. in the year 1079, it was almost three hundred years that this doctrine was contested, and before

(x) *Glos. Decret. de consecrat. dist. 2. in cap. Ego Be-*

rengarius.

(a) *Waldens. Tom. 2. c. 13.*

this mishapen monster of Transubstantiation could be lick'd into that form in which it is now settled and establish'd in the church of Rome. Here then is a plain account of the first rise of this doctrine, and of the several steps whereby it was advanced by the church of Rome into an article of the faith. I come now in the

Third place, to answer the great pretended demonstration of the impossibility that this doctrine, if it had been new, should ever have come in, in any age, and been received in the church: and consequently it must of necessity have been the perpetual belief of the church in all ages: for if it had not always been the doctrine of the church, whenever it had attempted first to come in, there would have been a great stir and bustle about it, and the whole christian world would have rose up in opposition to it. But we can shew no such time when it first came in, and when any such opposition was made to it, and therefore it was always the doctrine of the church. This demonstration monsieur Arnauld, a very learned man in France, pretends to be unanswerable: whether it be so or not, I shall briefly examine. And,

First, we do assign a punctual and very likely time of the first rise of this doctrine, about the beginning of the ninth age; though it did not take firm root, nor was fully settled and establish'd till towards the end of the eleventh. And this was the most likely time of all other, from the beginning of christianity, for so gross an error to appear; it being, by the confession and consent of their own historians, the most dark and dismal time that ever happened to the christian church, both for ignorance, and superstition, and vice. It came in together with idolatry, and was made use of to support it: a fit prop and companion for it. And indeed what tares might not the enemy have sown in so dark and long a night, when so considerable a part of the christian world was lull'd asleep in profound ignorance and superstition? and this agrees very well with the account which our SAVIOUR himself gives in the parable of the tares, of the springing up of errors and corruptions in the field of the church, Matth. xiii. 14. While men slept the enemy did

his work in the night, so that when they were awake they wondered how and whence the tares came ; but being sure they were there, and that they were not sown at first, they concluded the enemy had done it.

Secondly, I have shewn likewise that there was considerable opposition made to this error at its first coming in. The general ignorance and gross superstition of that age rendred the generality of people more quiet and secure, and disposed them to receive any thing that came under a pretence of mystery in religion, and of a greater reverence and devotion to the sacrament, and that seemed any way to countenance the worship of images, for which at that time they were zealously concern'd. But notwithstanding the security and passive temper of the people, men most eminent for piety and learning in that time made great resistance against it. I have already named Rabanus archbishop of Mentz, who oppos'd it as an error lately sprung up, and which had then gained but upon some few persons. To whom I may add Heribaldus bishop of Auxerres in France, Jo. Scotus, Erigena, and Ratramus, commonly known by the name of Bertram, who at the same time were employed by the emperor Charles the bald to oppose this growing error, and wrote learnedly against it. And these were the eminent men for learning in that time. And because monsieur Arnauld will not be satisfied unless there were some stir and bustle about it, Bertram in his preface to his book tells us, *that they who according to their several opinions talked differently about the mystery of CHRIST's body and blood were divided by no small schism.*

Thirdly, though for a more clear and satisfactory answer to this pretended demonstration I have been contented to untie this knot, yet I could without all these pains have cut it. For suppose this doctrine had silently come in and without opposition, so that we could not assign the particular time and occasion of its first rise ; yet if it be evident from the records of former ages, for above 500 years together, that this was not the ancient belief of the church ; and plain also, that this doctrine was afterwards received in the Roman church, though we could not tell how

how and when it came in, yet it would be the wildest and most extravagant thing in the world to set up a pretended demonstration of reason against plain experience and matter of fact. This is just Zeno's demonstration of the impossibility of motion against Diogenes walking before his eyes. For this is to undertake to prove that impossible to have been, which most certainly was. Just thus the servants in the parable might have demonstrated that the tares were wheat, because they were sure none but good seed was sown at first, and no man could give any account of the punctual time when any tares were sown, or by whom: and if an enemy had come to do it, he must needs have met with great resistance and opposition; but no such resistance was made, and therefore there could be no tares in the field, but that which they called tares was certainly good wheat. At the same rate a man might demonstrate that our king, his majesty of Great Britain, is not return'd into England, nor restor'd to his crown; because there being so great and powerful an army possess'd of his lands, and therefore obliged by interest to keep him out, it was impossible he should ever come in without a great deal of fighting and bloodshed: but there was no such thing, therefore he is not return'd and restor'd to his crown. And by the like kind of demonstration one might prove that the turk did not invade christendom last year, and besiege Vienna; 'because if he had, the most christian king, who had the greatest army in christendom in a readiness, would certainly have employed it against him; but monsieur Arnauld certainly knows no such thing was done: and therefore according to his way of demonstration, the matter of fact so commonly reported and believed, concerning the turk's invasion of christendom and besieging Vienna last year, was a perfect mistake. But a man may demonstrate till his head and heart ache, before he shall ever be able to prove that which certainly is, or was, never to have been. For of all sorts of impossibles nothing is more evidently so, than to make that which hath been not to have been. All the reason in the world is too weak to cope with so tough and obstinate a difficulty. And I have often wonder'd
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how a man of monsieur Arnauld's great wit and sharp judgment could prevail with himself to engage in so bad and baffled a cause; or could think to defend it with so wooden a dagger as his demonstration of reason against certain experience and matter of fact: a thing, if it be possible, of equal absurdity with what he pretends to demonstrate, Transubstantiation itself. I proceed to the

Third pretended ground of this doctrine of Transubstantiation; and that is, the infallible authority of the present church to make and declare new articles of faith. And this in truth is the ground into which the most of the learned men of the church did heretofore, and many do still resolve their belief of this doctrine: and, as I have already shewn, do plainly say that they see no sufficient reason, either from scripture or tradition, for the belief of it: and that they should have believed the contrary, had not the determination of the church obliged them otherwise.

But if this doctrine be obtruded upon the world merely by virtue of the authority of the Roman church, and the declaration of the council under pope Gregory VII. or of the Lateran council under Innocent III. then it is a plain innovation in the christian doctrine, and a new article of faith impos'd upon the christian world. And if any church hath this power, the christian faith may be enlarged and changed as often as men please; and that which is no part of our SAVIOUR's doctrine, nay, any thing, though never so absurd and unreasonable, may become an article of faith obliging all christians to the belief of it, whenever the church of Rome shall think fit to stamp her authority upon it: which would make christianity a most uncertain and endless thing.

The fourth pretended ground of this doctrine is, the necessity of such a change as this in the sacrament, to the comfort and benefit of those who receive it. But there is no colour for this, if the thing be rightly consider'd: because the comfort and benefit of the sacrament depends upon the blessing annexed to the institution. And as water in baptism, without any substantial change made in that element, may, by the divine blessing accompanying the

the institution, be effectual to the washing away of sin, and spiritual regeneration; so there can no reason in the world be given why the elements of bread and wine in the LORD's supper may not, by the same divine blessing accompanying this institution, make the worthy receivers partakers of all the spiritual comfort and benefit designed to us thereby, without any substantial change made in those elements, since our LORD hath told us, that *verily the flesh profiteth nothing*. So that if we could do so odd and strange a thing as to eat the very natural flesh and drink the blood of our LORD, I do not see of what greater advantage it would be to us, than what we may have by partaking of the symbols of his body and blood as he hath appointed *in remembrance of him*. For the spiritual efficacy of the sacrament doth not depend upon the nature of the thing received, supposing we receive what our LORD appointed, and receive it with a right preparation and disposition of mind, but upon the supernatural blessing that goes along with it, and makes it effectual to those spiritual ends for which it was appointed.

The fifth and last pretended ground of this doctrine is, to magnify the power of the priest in being able to work so great a miracle. And this with great pride and pomp is often urg'd by them as a transcendent instance of the divine wisdom, to find out so admirable a way to raise the power and reverence of the priest; that he should be able every day, and as often as he pleases, by repeating a few words, to work so miraculous a change, and (as they love most absurdly and blasphemously to speak) to make God himself.

But this is to pretend to a power above that of God himself, for he did not, nor cannot make himself, nor do any thing that implies a contradiction, as Transubstantiation evidently does in their pretending to make God. For to make that which already is, and make that now which always was, is not only vain and trifling if it could be done, but impossible, because it implies a contradiction.

And what if after all, Transubstantiation, if it were possible, and actually wrought by the priest, would yet be

no miracle? For there are two things necessary to a miracle, that there be a supernatural effect wrought, and that this effect be evident to sense. So that though a supernatural effect be wrought, yet if it be not evident to sense, it is to all the ends and purposes of a miracle as if it were not; and can be no testimony or proof of any thing, because itself stands in need of another miracle to give testimony to it, and to prove that it was wrought. And neither in scripture, nor in profane authors, nor in common use of speech, is any thing call'd a miracle but what falls under the notice of our senses: a miracle being nothing else but a supernatural effect evident to sense, the great end and design whereof is to be a sensible proof and conviction to us of something that we do not see.

And for want of this condition, Transubstantiation, if it were true, would be no miracle. It would be indeed very supernatural, but for all that it would not be a sign or miracle: for a sign or miracle is always a thing sensible, otherwise it could be no sign. Now that such a change as is pretended in Transubstantiation should really be wrought, and yet there should be no sign and appearance of it, is a thing very wonderful, but not to sense; for our senses perceive no change, the bread and wine in the sacrament to all our senses remaining just as they were before: and that a thing should remain to all appearance just as it was, hath nothing at all of wonder in it: we wonder indeed when we see a strange thing done, but no man wonders when he sees nothing done. So that Transubstantiation, if they will needs have it a miracle, is such a miracle as any man may work that hath but the confidence to face men down that he works it, and the fortune to be believed: and though the church of Rome may magnify their priests upon account of this miracle, which they say they can work every day and every hour, yet I cannot understand the reason of it; for when this great work (as they call it) is done, there is nothing more appears to be done than if there were no miracle: now such a miracle as to all appearance is no miracle, I see no reason why a protestant minister, as well as a popish priest, may not

not work as often as he pleases; or if he can but have the patience to let it alone, it will work itself. For surely nothing in the world is easier than to let a thing be as it is, and by speaking a few words over it to make it just what it was before. Every man, every day, may work ten thousand such miracles.

And thus I have dispatch'd the first part of my discourse, which was to consider the pretended grounds and reasons of the church of Rome for this doctrine, and to shew the weakness and insufficiency of them. I come in the

Second place, to produce our objections against it. Which will be of so much the greater force, because I have already shewn this doctrine to be destitute of all divine warrant and authority, and of any other sort of ground sufficient in reason to justify it. So that I do not now object against a doctrine which hath a fair probability of divine revelation on its side, for that would weigh down all objections, which did not plainly overthrow the probability and credit of its divine revelation; but I object against a doctrine by the mere will and tyranny of men imposed upon the belief of christians, without any evidence of scripture, and against all the evidence of reason and sense.

The objections I shall reduce to these two heads. First the infinite scandal of this doctrine to the christian religion. And secondly, the monstrous and insupportable absurdity of it.

First, the infinite scandal of this doctrine to the christian religion. And that upon these four accounts: 1. Of the stupidity of this doctrine. 2. The real barbarousness of this sacrament and rite of our religion, upon supposition of the truth of this doctrine. 3. Of the cruel and bloody consequences of it. 4. Of the danger of idolatry; which they are certainly guilty of, if this doctrine be not true.

1. Upon account of the stupidity of this doctrine I remember that Tully, who was a man of very good sense, instanceth in the conceit of eating God as the

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extremity of madness, and so stupid an apprehension as he thought no man was ever guilty of. (c) *When we call (says he) the fruits of the earth Ceres, and wine Bacchus, we use but the common language; but do you think any man so mad as to believe that which he eats to be God? It seems he could not believe that so extravagant a folly had ever entered into the mind of man. It is a very severe saying of Averroes the Arabian philosopher (who lived after this doctrine was entertained among christians) and ought to make the church of Rome blush, if she can; (d) I have travell'd (says he) over the world, and have found divers sects; but so sottish a sect or law I never found, as is the sect of the christians; because with their own teeth they devour their God whom they worship. It was great stupidity in the people of Israel to say, Come, let us make us gods; but it was civilly said of them, Let us make us gods that may go before us, in comparison of the church of Rome, who say, Let us make a god that we may eat him. So that upon the whole matter I cannot but wonder that they should choose thus to expose faith to the contempt of all that are endued with reason. And to speak the plain truth, the christian religion was never so horribly exposed to the scorn of atheists and infidels, as it hath been by this most absurd and senseless doctrine. But thus it was foretold that (e) the man of sin should come with power and signs and lying miracles, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, with all the legerdemain and juggling tricks of falsehood and imposture; amongst which this of Transubstantiation, which they call a miracle, and we a cheat, is one of the chief: and in all probability those common juggling words of *hocus focus*, are nothing else but a corruption of *hoc est corpus*, by way of ridiculous imitation of the priests of the church of Rome in their trick of Transubstantiation. Into such contempt by this foolish doctrine, and pretended miracle of theirs, have they brought the most sacred and venerable mystery of our religion.*

(c) De nat. Deorum, l. 3. (d) Dionys. Carthus.

4. dist. 10. art. 1. (e) 2 Thess. ii. 10.

2. It is very scandalous likewise upon account of the real barbarousness of this sacrament and rite of our religion, upon supposition of the truth of this doctrine. *Literally to eat the flesh of the SON of MAN, and to drink his blood,* St. Austin, as I have shewed before, declares to be a great impiety. And the impiety and barbarousness of the thing is not in truth extenuated, but only the appearance of it, by its being done under the species of bread and wine: for the thing they acknowledge is really done, and they believe that they verily eat and drink the natural flesh and blood of CHRIST. And what can any man do more unworthily towards his friend? How can he possibly use him more barbarously, than to feast upon his living flesh and blood? It is one of the greatest wonders in the world, that it should ever enter into the minds of men to put upon our SAVIOUR's words, so easily capable of a more convenient sense, and so necessarily requiring it, a meaning so plainly contrary to reason, and sense, and even to humanity itself. Had the ancient christians owned any such doctrine, we should have heard it from the adversaries of our religion in every page of their writings; and they would have desired no greater advantage against the christians, than to have been able to hit them in the teeth with their feasting upon the natural flesh and blood of their LORD, and their GOD, and their best friend. What endless triumphs would they have made upon this subject? and with what confidence would they have set the cruelty used by christians in their sacrament, against their god Saturn's eating his own children, and all the cruel and bloody rites of their idolatry? But that no such thing was then objected by the heathens to the christians, is to a wise man instead of a thousand demonstrations that no such doctrine was then believed.

3. It is scandalous also upon account of the cruel and bloody consequences of this doctrine; so contrary to the plain laws of christianity, and to one great end and design of this sacrament, which is to unite christians in the most perfect love and charity to one another: whereas this doctrine hath been the occasion of the most barbarous

and bloody tragedies that ever were acted in the world. For this hath been in the church of Rome the great burning article: and as absurd and unreasonable as it is, more christians have been murdered for the denial of it than perhaps for all the other articles of their religion. And I think it may generally pass for a true observation, that all sects are commonly most hot and furious for those things for which there is least reason; for what men want of reason for their opinions, they usually supply and make up in rage. And it was no more than needed to use this severity upon this occasion; for nothing but the cruel fear of death could in probability have driven so great a part of mankind into the acknowledgment of so unreasonable and senseless a doctrine.

O blessed SAVIOUR! thou best friend and greatest lover of mankind, who can imagine thou didst ever intend that men should kill one another for not being able to believe contrary to their senses; for being unwilling to think, that thou shouldst make one of the most horrid and barbarous things that can be imagin'd a main duty and principal mystery of thy religion; for not flattering the pride and presumption of the priest who says he can make God, and for not complying with the folly and stupidity of the people, who are made to believe that they can eat him?

4. Upon account of the danger of idolatry; which they are certainly guilty of if this doctrine be not true, and such a change as they pretend be not made in the sacrament; for if it be not, then they worship a creature instead of the creator, God blessed for ever. But such a change I have shewn to be impossible; or if it could be, yet they can never be certain that it is, and consequently are always in danger of idolatry; and that they can never be certain that such a change is made, is evident; because, according to the express determination of the council of Trent, that depends upon the mind and intention of the priest, which cannot certainly be known but by revelation, which is not pretended in this case. And if they be mistaken in this change, through the knavery or craftiness of the priest who will not make God but when he thinks fit, they must not think to excuse themselves from

idolatry because they intended to worship God and not a creature; for so the Persians might be excused from idolatry in worshipping the Sun, because they intend to worship God and not a creature; and so indeed we may excuse all the idolatry that ever was in the world, which is nothing else but a mistake of the deity, and upon that mistake a worshipping of something as God which is not God.

II. Besides the infinite scandal of this doctrine upon the accounts I have mentioned, the monstrous absurdities of it make it insupportable to any religion. I am very well assur'd of the grounds of religion in general, and of the christian religion in particular; and yet I cannot see that the foundations of any revealed religion, are strong enough to bear the weight of so many and so great absurdities as this doctrine of Transubstantiation would load it withal. And to make this evident, I shall not insist upon those gross contradictions, of the same body being in so many several places at once; of our SAVIOUR's giving away himself with his own hands to every one of his disciples, and yet still keeping himself to himself; and a thousand more of the like nature: but to shew the absurdity of this doctrine, I shall only ask these few questions.

1. Whether any man have, or ever had, greater evidence of the truth of any divine revelation than every man hath of the falshood of Transubstantiation? infidelity were hardly possible to men, if all men had the same evidence for the christian religion which they have against Transubstantiation, that is, the clear and irresistible evidence of sense. He that can once be brought to contradict or deny his senses, is at an end of certainty; for what can a man be certain of, if he be not certain of what he sees? In some circumstances our senses may deceive us, but no faculty deceives us so little and so seldom: and when our senses do deceive us, even that error is not to be corrected without the help of our senses.

2. Supposing this doctrine had been delivered in scripture in the very same words that it is decreed in the council of Trent, by what clearer evidence or stronger

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argument could any man prove to me that such words were in the bible, than I can prove to him that bread and wine after consecration are bread and wine still? he could but appeal to my eyes to prove such words to be in the bible, and with the same reason and justice might I appeal to several of his senses to prove to him that the bread and wine after consecration are bread and wine still.

3. Whether it be reasonable to imagine, that GOD should make that a part of the christian religion which shakes the main external evidence and confirmation of the whole? I mean the miracles which were wrought by our SAVIOUR and his apostles, the assurance whereof did at first depend upon the certainty of sense. For if the senses of those who say they saw them were deceived, then there might be no miracles wrought; and consequently it may justly be doubted whether that kind of confirmation which GOD hath given to the christian religion would be strong enough to prove it, supposing Transubstantiation to be a part of it: because every man hath as great evidence that Transubstantiation is false, as he hath that the christian religion is true. Suppose then Transubstantiation to be part of the christian doctrine, it must have the same confirmation with the whole, and that is miracles: but of all doctrines in the world it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a miracle. For if a miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very same assurance which any man hath of the truth of the miracle, he hath of the falshood of the doctrine, that is the clear evidence of his senses. For that there is a miracle wrought to prove, *that what he sees in the sacrament is not bread but the body of CHRIST*, there is only the evidence of sense; and there is the very same evidence to prove, *that what he sees in the sacrament is not the body of CHRIST but bread*. So that here would arise a new controversy, whether a man should rather believe his senses giving testimony against the doctrine of Transubstantiation, or bearing witness to a miracle wrought to confirm that doctrine; there being the very same evidence against the truth of the doctrine, which there is for the truth of the miracle: and then the argument for

Transubstantiation, and the objection against it, would just balance one another; and consequently Transubstantiation is not to be proved by a miracle, because that would be, to prove a man by something that he sees, that he doth not see what he sees. And if there were no other evidence that Transubstantiation is no part of the christian doctrine, this would be sufficient, that what proves the one doth as much overthrow the other; and that miracles which are certainly the best and highest external proof of christianity, are the worst proof in the world of Transubstantiation, unless a man can renounce his senses at the same time that he relies upon them. For a man cannot believe a miracle without relying upon sense, nor Transubstantiation without renouncing it. So that never were any two things so ill coupled together as the doctrine of christianity and that of Transubstantiation, because they draw several ways, and are ready to strangle one another: for the main evidence of the christian doctrine, which is miracles, is resolved into the certainty of sense, but this evidence is clear and point-blank against Transubstantiation.

4. And lastly, I would ask what we are to think of the argument which our SAVIOUR used to convince his disciples after his resurrection that his body was really risen, and that they were not deluded by a ghost or apparition? Is it a necessary and conclusive argument or not? Luke xxiv. 38, 39. *And he said unto them, why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.* But now if we suppose with the church of Rome the doctrine of Transubstantiation to be true, and that he had instructed his disciples in it just before his death, strange thoughts might justly have risen in their hearts, and they might have said to him; LORD, it is but a few days ago since thou didst teach us not to believe our senses, but directly contrary to what we saw, viz. that the bread which thou gavest us in the sacrament, though we saw and handled it, and tasted it to be bread, yet was not bread, but thine own natural body; and now thou appealest to our senses to prove that this

is thy body which we now see. If seeing and handling be an unquestionable evidence that things are what they appear to our senses, then we were deceived before in the sacrament; and if they be not, then we are not sure now that this is thy body which we now see and handle, but it may be perhaps bread under the appearance of flesh and bones; just as in the sacrament, that which we saw and handled, and tasted to be bread, was thy flesh and bones under the form and appearance of bread. Now upon this supposition it would have been a hard matter to have quieted the thoughts of his disciples: For if the argument which our SAVIOUR used did certainly prove to them, that what they saw and handled was his body, his very natural flesh and bones, because they saw and handled them, (which it were impious to deny) it would as strongly prove, that what they saw and received before in the sacrament, was not the natural body and blood of CHRIST, but real bread and wine: and consequently, that according to our SAVIOUR's arguing after his resurrection they had no reason to believe Transubstantiation before. For that very argument by which our SAVIOUR proves the reality of his body after his resurrection doth as strongly prove the reality of bread and wine after consecration. But our SAVIOUR's argument was most infallibly good and true, and therefore the doctrine of Transubstantiation is undoubtedly false.

Upon the whole matter I shall only say this, that some other Points between us and the church of Rome are managed by some kind of wit and subtilty, but this of Transubstantiation is carried on by mere dint of impudence and facing down of mankind.

And of this the more discerning persons of that church are of late grown so sensible that they would now be glad to be rid of this odious and ridiculous doctrine. But the council of Trent hath rivetted it so fast into their religion, and made it so necessary and essential a point of their belief, that they cannot now part with it if they would; it is like a millstone hung about the neck of popery, which will sink it at the last,

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And though some of their greatest wits, as cardinal Perron, and of late monsieur Arnauld, have undertaken the defence of it in great volumes; yet it is an absurdity of that monstrous and massy weight, that no human authority or wit is able to support it. It will make the very pillars of St. Peter's crack, and requires more volumes to make it good than would fill the Vatican.

And now I would apply myself to the poor deluded people of that church, if they were either permitted by their priests, or durst venture without their leave, to look into their religion and to examine the doctrines of it. Consider, and shew yourselves men. Do not suffer yourselves any longer to be led blindfold, and by an implicit faith in your priests, into the belief of nonsense and contradiction. Think it enough and too much to let them rook you out of your money for pretended pardons and counterfeit relicks, but let not the authority of any priest or church persuade you out of your senses. Credulity is certainly a fault as well as infidelity: and he who said, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*; hath no where said, *Blessed are they that have seen, and yet have not believed*; much less, *Blessed are they that believe directly contrary to what they see*.

To conclude this discourse. By what hath been said upon this argument it will appear, with how little truth, and reason, and regard to the interest of our common christianity, it is so often said by our Adversaries, that there are as good arguments for the belief of Transubstantiation as of the doctrine of the Trinity: when they themselves do acknowledge with us that the doctrine of the Trinity is grounded upon the Scriptures, and that according to the interpretation of them by the consent of the ancient fathers: but their doctrine of Transubstantiation I have plainly shewn to have no such ground, and that this is acknowledged by very learned men of their own church. And this doctrine of theirs being first plainly proved by us to be destitute of all divine warrant and authority, our objections against it from the manifest contradictions of it to reason and sense, are so many demonstrations of the falshood of it. Against all which

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they have nothing to put in the opposite scale but the infallibility of their church, for which there is even less colour of proof from scripture than for Transubstantiation itself. But so fond are they of their own innovations and errors, that rather than the dictates of their church, how groundless and absurd soever, should be called in question; rather than not have their will of us in imposing upon us what they please, they will overthrow any article of the christian faith, and shake the very foundations of our common religion: a clear evidence that the church of Rome is not the true mother, since she can be so well contented that christianity should be destroyed rather than the point in question should be decided against her.

S E R M O N XXVII.

The protestant religion vindicated from
the charge of singularity and novelty.

Preached before the KING at *Whitehall*,
April 2, 1680.

J O S H U A xxiv. 15.

If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve.

THESE are the words of Joshua; who, after he had brought the people of Israel thro' many difficulties and hazards into the quiet possession of the promised land, like a good prince and father of his country, was very solicitous, before his death, to lay the firmest foundation he could devise of the future happiness and prosperity of that people, in whose present settlement he had, by the blessing of GOD, been so successful an instrument.

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And because he knew no means so effectual to this end, as to confirm them in the religion and worship of the true God, who had by so remarkable and miraculous a providence planted them in that good land; he summons the people together, and represents to them all those considerations that might engage them and their posterity for ever to continue in the true religion. He tells them what God had already done for them, and what he had promised to do more, if they would be faithful to him: and on the other hand, what fearful calamities he had threatned, and would certainly bring upon them, in case they should transgress his covenant, and go and serve other gods. And after many arguments to this purpose, he concludes with this earnest exhortation at the 14th verse, *Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.*

And to give the greater weight and force to this exhortation, he does by a very eloquent kind of insinuation as it were once more set them at liberty, and leave them to their own election: it being the nature of man to stick more stedfastly to that which is not violently imposed, but is our free and deliberate choice: *And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve.*

Which words offer to our consideration these following observations.

1. It is here supposed that a nation must be of some religion or other. Joshua does not put this to their choice, but takes it for granted.

2. That though religion be a matter of choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in itself, nor to a good governor, what religion his people are of. Joshua does not put it to them as if it were an indifferent matter whether they served God or idols; he had sufficiently declared before which of these was to be preferred.

3. The true religion may have several prejudices and objections against it: *If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD*, intimating that upon some accounts, and to some persons, it may appear so.

4. That

4. That the true religion hath those real advantages on its side, that it may safely be referr'd to any considerate man's choice. And this seems to be the true reason why Joshua refers it to them: not that he thought the thing indifferent, but because he was fully satisfied that the truth and goodness of the one above the other was so evident, that there was no danger that any prudent man should make a wrong choice, *If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve*; intimating, that the plain difference of the things in competition would direct them what to choose.

5. The examples of princes and governors hath a very great influence upon the people in matters of religion. This I collect from the context: and Joshua was sensible of it; and therefore though he firmly believed the true religion to have those advantages that would certainly recommend it to every impartial man's judgment, yet knowing that the multitude are easily imposed upon and led into error he thought fit to incline and determine them by his own example, and by declaring his own peremptory resolution in the case, *Choose you this day whom you will serve; as for me and my house we will serve the LORD.* Laws are a good security to religion; but the example of governors is a living law, which secretly overrules the minds of men, and bends them to a compliance with it.

——— *Non sic inflectere sensus
Humanos edicta valent, ut vita Regentis.*

The lives and actions of princes have usually a greater sway upon the minds of the people than their laws.

All these observations are I think very natural, and very considerable. I shall not be able to speak to them all; but shall proceed so far as the time and your patience will give me leave.

First, it is here supposed that a nation must be of some religion or other. Joshua does not put it to their choice whether they would worship any deity at all. That had been too wild and extravagant a supposition, and which it is likely in those days had never entered into any man's mind. But he takes it for granted that all people will be

of some religion ; and then offers it to their consideration which they would pitch upon, *Choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, &c.*

Religion is a thing to which men are not only formed by education and custom, but, as Tully says, *Quo omnes duce naturâ vebimur*, it is that to which we are all carried by a natural inclination; which is the true reason why some religion or other hath so universally prevailed in all ages and places of the world.

The temporal felicity of men, and the ends of government can very hardly, if at all, be attained without religion. Take away this, and all obligations of conscience cease: and where there is no obligation of conscience, all security of truth and justice and mutual confidence among men is at an end. For why should I repose confidence in that man, why should I take his word, or believe his promise, or put any of my interests and concerns into his power, who hath no other restraint upon him but that of human laws, and is at liberty in his own mind and principles to do whatever he judgeth to be expedient for his interest, provided he can but do it without danger to himself? So that declared atheism and infidelity doth justly bring men under a jealousy and suspicion with all mankind; and every wise man hath reason to be upon his guard against those, from whom he hath no cause to expect more justice and truth and equity in their dealings than he can compel them to by the mere dint and force of laws. For by declaring themselves free from all other obligations they give us fair warning what we are to expect at their hands, and how far we may trust them. Religion is the strongest band of human society, and necessary to the welfare and happiness of mankind, as could not have been more, if we could suppose the Being of God himself to have been purposely designed and contrived for the benefit and advantage of men: so that very well may it be taken for granted, that a nation must be of some religion or other.

Secondly, Though religion be a matter of our choice yet it is neither a thing indifferent in itself, nor to a good governor, what religion his people are of. Notwithstanding

ing the supposition of the text, Joshua doth not leave them at liberty whether they will serve GOD or Idols; but by a very rhetorical scheme of speech endeavours to engage them more firmly to the worship of the true GOD.

To countenance and support the true religion, and to take care that the people be instructed in it, and that none be permitted to debauch and seduce men from it, properly belongs to the civil magistrate. This power the kings of Israel always exercised, not only with allowance, but with great approbation and commendation from GOD himself. And the case is not altered since Christianity: the better the religion is, the better it deserves the countenance and support of the civil authority. And this power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion was never called in question, but by the enthusiasts of these latter times: and yet among these, every father and master of a family claims this power over his children and servants, at the same time that they deny it to the magistrate over his subjects. But I would fain know where the difference lies. Hath a master of a family more power over those under his government than the magistrate hath? no man ever pretended it: nay, so far is it from that, that the natural authority of a father may be, and often is, limited and restrained by the laws of the civil magistrate. And why then may not a magistrate exercise the same power over his subjects in matters of religion, which every master challengeth to himself in his own family? that is, to establish the true worship of GOD in such manner and with such circumstances as he thinks best, and to permit none to affront it, or to seduce from it those that are under his care. And to prevent all misunderstandings in this matter, I do not hereby ascribe any thing to the magistrate that can possibly give him any pretence of right to reject GOD's true religion, or to declare what he pleases to be so, and what books he pleases to be canonical and the word of GOD; and consequently to make a false religion so current by the stamp of his authority, as to oblige his subjects to the profession of it: because he who acknow-

ledgeth himself to derive all his authority from God, can pretend to none against him. But if a false religion be established by law, the case here is the same as in all other laws that are sinful in the matter of them, but yet made by a lawful authority; in this case the subject is not bound to profess a false religion, but patiently to suffer for the constant profession of the true.

And to speak freely in this matter, I cannot think (till I be better inform'd, which I am always ready to be) that any pretence of conscience warrants any man, that is not extraordinarily commission'd, as the apostles and first publishers of the gospel were, and cannot justify that commission by miracles as they did, to affront the establish'd religion of a nation (though it be false) and openly to draw men off from the profession of it in contempt of the magistrate and the law: All that persons of a different religion can in such a case reasonably pretend to, is to enjoy the private liberty and exercise of their own conscience and religion; for which they ought to be very thankful, and to forbear the open making of profelytes to their own religion, (though they be never so sure that they are in the right) till they have either an extraordinary commission from God to that purpose, or the providence of God make way for it by the permission or connivance of the magistrate. Not but that every man hath a right to publish and propagate the true religion, and to declare it against a false one: but there is no obligation upon any man to attempt this to no purpose, and when without a miracle it can have no other effect but the loss of his own life; unless he have an immediate command and commission from God to this purpose, and be endued with a power of miracles, as a publick seal and testimony of that commission, which was the case of the apostles, who after they had received an immediate commission were not to enter upon the execution of it, but to *stay at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high*. In this case a man is to abide all hazards, and may reasonably expect both extraordinary assistance and success, as the apostles had; and even a miraculous protection till his

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work be done ; and after that, if he be call'd to suffer martyrdom, a supernatural support under those sufferings.

And that they are guilty however of gross hypocrisy who pretend a further obligation of conscience in this matter, I shall give this plain demonstration, which relies upon concessions generally made on all hands, and by all parties. No protestant (that I know of) holds himself obliged to go and preach up his religion and make converts in Spain or Italy : nor do either the protestant ministers or popish priests think themselves bound in conscience to preach the gospel in Turkey, to confute the alchoran, and to convert the Mahometans. And what is the reason ? because of the severity of the inquisition in popish countries, and of the laws in Turkey. But doth the danger then alter the obligation of conscience ? No certainly ; but it makes men throw off the false pretence and disguise of it : but where there is a real obligation of conscience, danger should not deter men from their duty, as it did not the apostles : which shews their case to be different from ours, and that probably this matter was stated right at first. So that whatever is pretended, this is certain, that the priests and jesuits of the church of Rome have in truth no more obligation of conscience to make converts here in England than in Sweden or Turkey ; where it seems the evident danger of the attempt hath for these many years given them a perfect discharge from their duty in this particular. I shall join the

Third and fourth observations together. *That though the true religion may have several prejudices and objections against it, yet upon examination there will be found those real advantages on its side, that it may safely be referred to any considerate man's choice : If it seem evil unto you that you serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve. If it seem evil unto you, intimating, that to some persons, and upon some accounts, it may appear so. But when the matter is truly represented, the choice is not difficult, nor requires any long deliberation, Choose you this day whom you will serve.* Let but the cause be fully and impartially heard, and a wise man may determine

himself upon the spot, and give his verdict without ever going from the bar.

The true religion hath always lain under some prejudices with partial and inconsiderate men; which commonly spring from one of these two causes, either the prepossessions of a contrary religion, or the contrariety of the true religion to the vicious inclinations and practices of men, which usually lies at the bottom of all prejudice against religion. Religion is an enemy to mens beloved lusts, and therefore they are enemies to religion. I begin with the first, which is as much as I shall be able to compass at this time.

I. The prepossessions of a false religion; which commonly pretends two advantages on its side, antiquity and universality; and is wont to object to the true religion novelty and singularity. And both these are intimated both before and after the text: *Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt: and choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell.* Idolatry was the religion of their fathers, and had spread itself over the greatest and most ancient nations of the world, and the most famous for learning and arts, the Chaldeans and Egyptians; and was the religion of the Amorites, and the nations round about them. So that Joshua represents the heathen religion with all its strength and advantage, and does not dissemble its confident pretence to antiquity and universality, whereby they would also insinuate the novelty and singularity of the worship of the God of Israel. And it is well worthy our observation, that one or both of these have always been the exceptions of false religions (especially of idolatry and superstition) against the true religion. The ancient idolaters of the world pretended their religion to be ancient and universal, that their fathers served these gods, and that the worship of the God of Israel was a plain innovation upon the ancient and catholick religion of the world, and that the very first rise and original of it was within the memory of their fathers: and no doubt they were almost

almost perpetually upon the jews with that pert question, Where was your religion before Abraham? and telling them that it was the religion of a very small part and corner of the world, confined within a little territory: but the great nations of the world, the Egyptians and Chaldeans, famous for all kind of knowledge and wisdom, and indeed all the nations round about them, worshipped other gods: and therefore it was an intolerable arrogance and singularity in them, to condemn their fathers and all the world, to be of a religion different from all other nations, and thereby to separate themselves and make a schism from the rest of mankind.

And when the gospel appeared in the world, which the apostle to the Hebrews (to prevent the scandal of that word) calls the time of reformation, the jews and heathen still renewed the same objections against christianity. The jews urged against it, not the ancient scriptures and the true word of God, but that which they pretended to be of much greater authority, the unwritten word, the ancient and constant traditions of their church; and branded this new religion with the name of heresy, *after the way* (saith St. Paul) *that you call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers; believing all things that are written in the law, and in the prophets:* By which we see that they of the church of Rome were not the first who called it heresy to reject human traditions, and to make the scriptures the rule of faith: this was done long before by their reverend predecessors, the scribes and pharisees.

And the gentiles, they pretended against it both antiquity and universality, the constant belief and practice of all ages, and almost all places of the world; *Sequimur majores nostros qui feliciter secuti sunt suos*, says Symmachus, *We follow our forefathers, who happily followed theirs;* but you bring a new religion, never known nor heard of in the world before.

And when the christian religion was most miserably depraved and corrupted, in that dismal night of ignorance which overspread these western parts of the world about the ninth and tenth centuries; and many pernicious doc-

trines and superstitious practices were introduced, to the woful defacing of the christian religion, and making it quite another thing from what our SAVIOUR had left it; and these corruptions and abuses had continued for several ages; no sooner was a reformation attempted but the church of Rome made the same out-cry of novelty and singularity: and though we have substantially answered it a thousand times, yet we cannot obtain of them to forbear that thread-bare question, *Where was your religion before Luther?*

I shall therefore apply myself to answer these two exceptions with all the brevity and clearness I can: and I doubt not to make it appear, that as to the point of universality (though that be no-wise necessary to justify the truth of any religion) ours is not inferior to theirs; if we take in the christians of all ages, and of all parts of the world: and as to the point of antiquity, that our faith and the doctrines of our religion have clearly the advantage of theirs; all our faith being unquestionably ancient, theirs not so.

1. As to the point of universality. Which they of the church of Rome, I know not for what reason, will needs make an inseparable property and mark of the true church. And they never flout at the protestant religion with so good a grace among the ignorant people, as when they are bragging of their numbers, and despising poor protestancy because embraced by so few. This pestilent northern heresy (as of late they scornfully call it) is entertained it seems only in this cold and cloudy corner of the world, by a company of dull stupid people, that can neither penetrate into the proofs nor the possibility of Transubstantiation; whereas to the more refined southern wits all these difficult and obscure points are as clear as the sun at noon-day.

But to speak to the thing itself. If number be necessary to prove the truth and goodness of any religion, ours upon enquiry will be found not so inconsiderable as our adversaries would make it: those of the reformed religion, according to the most exact calculations that have been made by learned men, being esteemed not much un-

equal in number to those of the romish persuasion. But then if we take in the ancient christian church, whose faith was the same with ours; and other christian churches at this day, which altogether are vastly greater and more numerous than the Roman church, and which agree with us, several of them in very considerable doctrines and practices in dispute between us and the church of Rome, and all of them in disclaiming that fundamental point of the Roman religion, and sum of christianity (as Bellarmine calls it) I mean the supremacy of the bishop of Rome over all christians and churches in the world, then the number on our side will be much greater than on theirs.

But we will not stand upon this advantage with them. Suppose we were by much the fewer. So hath the true church of God often been, without any the least prejudice to the truth of their religion. What think we of the church in Abraham's time, which for ought we know was confined to one family; and one small kingdom, that of Melchisedec king of Salem? What think we of it in Moses's time, when it was confined to one people wandering in the wilderness? What of it in Elijah's time, when besides the two tribes that worshipped at Jerusalem, there were in the other ten but *seven thousand* that had not bowed their knee to Baal? What in our SAVIOUR's time, when the whole christian church consisted of twelve apostles, and seventy disciples, and some few followers beside? How would Bellarmine have despised this little flock, because it wanted one or two of its goodliest marks of the true church, universality and splendor? And what think we of the christian church in the height of arianism and pelagianism, when a great part of christendom was over-run with these errors, and the number of the orthodox was inconsiderable in comparison of the hereticks?

But what need I to urge these instances? As if the truth of a religion were to be estimated and carried by the major vote; which as it can be an argument to none but fools, so I dare say no honest and wise man ever made use of it for a solid proof of the truth and goodness of any church

church or religion. If multitude be an argument that men are in the right, in vain then hath the scripture said, *thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*. For if this argument be of any force, the greater number never go wrong.

2. As to the point of antiquity. This is not always a certain mark of the true religion. For surely there was a time when christianity began and was a new profession, and then both judaism and paganism had certainly the advantage of it in this point of antiquity. But the proper question in this case is, Which is the true ancient christian faith, that of the church of Rome or ours? And to make this matter plain, it is to be considered, that a great part of the Roman faith is the same with ours: as, namely, the articles of the apostles creed, as explained by the first four general councils. And these make up our whole faith, so far as concerns matters of mere and simple belief, that of absolute necessity to salvation. And in this faith of ours, there is nothing wanting that can be shewn in any ancient creed of the christian church. And thus far our faith, and theirs of the Roman church, are undoubtedly of equal antiquity, that is, as ancient as christianity itself.

All the question is, as to the matters in difference between us. The principal whereof are the twelve new articles of the creed of Pope Pius IV. concerning the sacrifice of the mass, transubstantiation, the communion in one kind only, purgatory, &c. not one of which is to be found in any ancient creed or confession of faith generally allowed in the christian church. The antiquity of these we deny, and affirm them to be innovations; and have particularly proved them to be so, not only to the answering, but almost to the silencing of our adversaries.

And as for the negative articles of the protestant religion, in opposition to the errors and corruptions of the romish faith, these are by accident become a part of our faith and religion, occasioned by their errors; as the renouncing of the doctrines of arianism became part of the catholick religion, after the rise of that heresy.

So that the case is plainly this; we believe and teach all that is contained in the creeds of the ancient christian church, and was by them esteemed necessary to salvation: and this is our religion. But now the church of Rome hath innovated in the christian religion, and made several additions to it; and greatly corrupted it both in the doctrines and practices of it: and these additions and corruptions are their religion, as it is distinct from ours; and both because they are corruptions and novelties, we have rejected them: and our rejection of these is our reformation: and our reformation we grant (if this will do them any good) not to be so ancient as their corruptions; all reformation necessarily supposing corruptions and errors to have been before it.

And now we are at a little better leisure to answer that captious question of theirs, *Where was your religion before Luther?* Where-ever christianity was; in some places more pure, in others more corrupted: but especially in these western parts of christendom over-grown for several ages with manifold errors and corruptions, which the reformation hath happily cut off, and cast away. So that though our reformation was as late as Luther, our religion is as ancient as christianity itself. For when the additions which the church of Rome hath made to the ancient christian faith, and their innovations in practice are pared off, that which remains of their religion is ours; and this they cannot deny to be every tittle of it the ancient christianity.

And what other answer than this could the jews have given to the like question, if it had been put to them by the ancient idolaters of the world, *Where was your religion before Abraham?* but the very same in substance which we now give to the church of Rome? That for many ages the worship of the one true God had been corrupted, and the worship of idols had prevailed in a great part of the world; that Abraham was raised up by God to reform religion, and to reduce the worship of God to its first institution; in the doing whereof he necessarily separated himself and his family from the communion of those idolaters. So that though the reformation

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tion which Abraham began was new, yet his religion was truly ancient; as old as that of Noah, and Enoch, and Adam. Which is the same in substance that we say, and with the same and equal reason.

And if they will still complain of the newness of our reformation, so do we too, and are heartily sorry it began no sooner; but however better late than never. Besides it ought to be considered, that this objection of novelty lies against all reformation whatsoever, though ever so necessary, and though things be ever so much amiss: and it is in effect to say, that if things be once bad, they must never be better, but must always remain as they are; for they cannot be better, without being reformed, and a reformation must begin some time, and whenever it begins it is certainly new. So that if a real reformation be made, the thing justifies itself; and no objection of novelty ought to take place against that which upon all accounts was so fit and necessary to be done. And if they of the church of Rome would but speak their mind out in this matter, they are not so much displeased at the reformation which we have made because it is new, as because it is a reformation. It was the humour of Babylon of old (as the prophet, Jer. li. 9. tells us) *that she would not be healed*; and this is still the temper of the church of Rome, they *hate to be reformed*; and rather than acknowledge themselves to have been once in an error, they will continue in it for ever. And this is that which at first made, and still continues the breach and separation between us; of which we are no-wise guilty who have only reformed what was amiss, but they who obstinately persist in their errors, and will needs impose them upon us and will not let us be of their communion unless we will say they are no errors.

II. The other prejudice against the true religion is, the contrariety of it to the vicious inclinations and practices of men.

It is too heavy a yoke, and lays too great a restraint upon human nature. And this is that which in truth lies at the bottom of all objections against religion, *Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.*

But this argument will require a discourse by itself, and therefore I shall not now enter upon it; only crave your patience a little longer, whilst I make some reflexions upon what hath been already delivered.

You see what are the exceptions which idolatry and superstition have always made, and do at this day still make, against the true religion; and how slight and insignificant they are.

But do we then charge the church of Rome with idolatry? our church most certainly does so, and hath always done it from the beginning of the reformation; in her homilies, and liturgy, and canons, and in the writings of her best and ablest champions. And though I have, as impartially as I could, consider'd what hath been said on both sides in this controversy; yet I must confess I could never yet see any tolerable defence made by them against this heavy charge. And they themselves acknowledge themselves to be greatly under the suspicion of it, by saying (as Cardinal Perron and others do) that the primitive christians for some ages did neither worship images, nor pray to saints, for fear of being thought to approach too near the heathen idolatry: and, which is yet more, divers of their most learned men do confess, that if transubstantiation be not true, they are as gross idolaters as any in the world. And I hope they do not expect it from us, that in compliment to them, and to acquit them from the charge of idolatry, we should presently deny our senses, and believe transubstantiation; and if we do not believe this, they grant we have reason to charge them with idolatry.

But we own them to be a true church; which they cannot be, if they be guilty of idolatry. This they often urge us withal, and there seems at first sight to be something in it; and for that reason I shall endeavour to give so clear and satisfactory an answer to it, as that we may never more be troubled with it.

The truth is, we would fain hope, because they still retain the essentials of christianity, and profess to believe all the articles of the christian faith, that notwithstanding their corruptions they may still retain the true essence

fence of a church: as a man may be truly and really a man, though he have the plague upon him; and for that reason be fit to be avoided by all that wish well to themselves. But if this will not do, we cannot help it. Therefore to push the matter home; are they sure that this is a firm and good consequence, *that if they be idolaters, they cannot be a true church?* Then let them look to it. It is they, I take it, that are concerned to prove themselves a true church, and not we to prove it for them. And if they will not understand it of themselves, it is fit they should be told that there is a great difference between concessions of charity and of necessity, and that a very different use ought to be made of them. We are willing to think the best of them; but if they dislike our charity in this point, nothing against the hair: if they will forgive us this injury, we will not offend them any more: but rather than have any farther difference with them about this matter, we will for quietness sake compound it thus; that 'till they can clearly acquit themselves from being idolaters, they shall never more against their wills be esteemed a true church.

And now to draw to a conclusion.

If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, and to worship him only; to pray to him alone, and that only in the name and mediation of JESUS CHRIST, as he hath given us commandment: because there is but one GOD, and one MEDIATOR between GOD and man the man CHRIST JESUS. If it seem evil unto you to have the liberty to serve GOD in a language you can understand; and to have the free use of the holy scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation; and to have the sacraments of our religion entirely administered to us, as our LORD did institute and appoint.

And on the other hand, if it seem good to us, to put our necks once more under that yoke, which our fathers were not able to bear: if it be really a preference to a prince to hold the pope's stirrup, and a privilege to be deposed by him at his pleasure, and a courtesy to be killed at his command: if to pray without understand-

ing, and to obey without reason, and to believe against sense; if ignorance, and implicit faith, and an inquisition, be in good earnest such charming and desirable things: then welcome popery; which, wherever thou comest, dost infallibly bring all these wonderful privileges and blessings along with thee.

But, the question is not now about the choice but the change of our religion, after we have been so long settled in the quiet possession and enjoyment of it. Men are very loth to change even a false religion. *Hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods?* And surely there is much more reason why we should be tenacious of the truth, and hold fast that which is good.

We have the best religion in the world, the very same which the SON of GOD revealed, which the apostles planted and confirmed by miracles, and which the noble army of martyrs sealed with their blood: and we have retrench'd from it all false doctrines and superstitious practices which have been added since. And I think we may without immodesty say, that upon the plain square of scripture and reason, of the tradition and practice of the first and best ages of the christian church, we have fully justified our religion; and made it evident to the world, that our adversaries are put to very hard shifts, and upon a perpetual disadvantage in the defence of theirs.

I wish it were as easy for us to justify our lives as our religion. I do not mean in comparison of our adversaries (for that, as bad as we are, I hope we are yet able to do) but in comparison of the rules of our holy religion, from which we are infinitely swerv'd; which I would to GOD we all did seriously consider and lay to heart: I say, in comparison of the rules of our holy religion, *which teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world, in expectation of the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great GOD, and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST; to whom with the FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, &c.*

S E R M O N XXVIII.

Objections against the true Religion answered.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve.

THESE words, as I have already declared in the former discourse, are the last counsel and advice which Joshua gave to the people of Israel, after he had safely conducted them into the land of Canaan. And that he might the more effectually persuade them to continue stedfast in the worship of the true GOD, by an eloquent kind of insinuation he doth as it were once more set them at liberty, and leave them to their own choice; *If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve.*

The plain sense of which words may be resolved into this proposition, that notwithstanding all the prejudices and objections against the true religion, yet it hath those real advantages on its side, that it may safely be referred to any impartial and considerate man's choice; *if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD*; intimating that to some persons, and upon some accounts, it may seem so; but when the matter is thoroughly examined, the resolution and choice cannot be difficult, nor require any long deliberation, *choose you this day whom you will serve.*

The true religion hath always lain under some prejudices with partial and inconsiderate men, arising chiefly from these two causes; the prepossessions of a false religion; and the contrariety of the true religion to the inclinations of men, and the uneasiness of it in point of practice.

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First, from the prepossessions of a false religion; which hath always been wont to lay claim to antiquity and universality, and to charge the true religion with novelty and singularity. And both these are intimated before the text; *put away the gods whom your fathers served, on the other side of the flood and in Egypt, and choose you this day whom you will serve.* It was pretended that the worship of idols was the ancient religion of the world, of those great nations the Egyptians and Chaldeans, and of all the nations round about them. But this hath already been considered at large.

Secondly, there are another sort of prejudices against religion, more apt to stick with men of better sense and reason; and these arise principally from the contrariety of the true religion to the inclinations of men, and the uneasiness of it in point of practice. It is pretended that religion is a heavy yoke, and lays too great a restraint upon human nature, and that the laws of it bear too hard upon the general inclinations of mankind.

I shall not at present meddle with the speculative objections against religion, upon account of the pretended unreasonableness of many things in point of belief: because the contrariety of the true religion to the inclinations of men, and the uneasiness of it in point of practice, is that which in truth lies at the bottom of atheism and infidelity, and raises all that animosity which is in the minds of bad men against religion, and exasperates them to oppose it with all their wit and malice: *men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* And if this prejudice were but once removed, and men were in some measure reconciled to the practice of religion, the speculative objections against it would almost vanish of themselves: for there wants little else to enable a man to answer them, but a willingness of mind to have them answered, and that we have no interest and inclination to the contrary. And therefore I shall at present wholly apply myself to remove this prejudice against religion, from the contrariety of it to the inclinations of men, and the uneasiness of it in point of practice.

And there are two parts of this objection.

1st. That a great part of the laws of religion do thwart the natural inclinations of men, which may reasonably be supposed to be from God. And,

2dly. That all of them together are a heavy yoke, and do lay too great a restraint upon human nature, intrenching too much upon the pleasures and liberty of it.

I. That a great part of the laws of religion do thwart the natural inclinations of men, which may reasonably be supposed to be from God. So that God seems to have set our nature and our duty at variance, to have given us appetites and inclinations one way, and laws another: which if it were true, must needs render the practice of religion very grievous and uneasy.

The force of this objection is very smartly expressed in those celebrated verses of a noble poet of our own, which are so frequently in the mouths of many who are thought to bear no good-will to religion.

O wearisome condition of humanity !

Born under one law, to another bound !

Vainly begot, and yet forbidden vanity ;

Created sick, commanded to be sound.

If nature did not take delight in blood,

She would have made more easy ways to good.

So that this objection would fain charge the sins of men upon God; first upon account of the evil inclinations of our nature; and then of the contrariety of our duty to those inclinations. And from the beginning man hath always been apt to lay the blame of his faults where it can least lie, upon goodness and perfection itself. The very first sin that ever man was guilty of he endeavoured to throw upon God: *The woman whom thou gavest me,* saith Adam, *she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* And his posterity are still apt to excuse themselves the same way. But to return a particular answer to this objection.

I. We will acknowledge so much of it as is true; that there is a great degeneracy and corruption of human nature, from what it was originally framed when it came

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out of God's hands ; of which the scripture gives us this account, that it was occasioned by the voluntary transgression of a plain and easy command given by God to our first parents. And this weakness contracted by the fall of our first parents naturally descends upon us their posterity, and visibly discovers itself in our inclinations to evil, and impotence to that which is good.

And of this the heathen philosophers, from the light of nature, and their own experience and observation of themselves and others, were very sensible ; that human nature was very much declined from its primitive rectitude, and sunk into a weak and drooping and sickly state, which they called a *μετεσπύσινσις*, the moulting of the wings of the soul : but yet they were so just and reasonable as not to charge this upon God, but upon some corruption and impurity contracted by the soul in a former state, before its union with the body. For the descent of the soul into these gross earthly bodies they looked upon as partly the punishment of faults committed in a former state, and partly as the opportunity of a new trial in order to its purgation and recovery. And this was the best account they were able to give of this matter, without the light of divine revelation.

So that the degeneracy of human nature is universally acknowledged, and God acquitted from being the cause of it : but however, the posterity of Adam do all partake of the weakness contracted by his fall, and do still labour under the miseries and inconveniencies of it. But then this degeneracy is not total. For though our faculties be much weakened and disordered, yet they are not destroyed nor wholly perverted. Our natural judgment and conscience doth still dictate to us what is good, and what we ought to do ; and the impressions of the natural law, as to the great lines of our duty, are still legible upon our hearts. So that the law written in God's word is not contrary to the law written upon our hearts. And therefore it is not truly said, *that we are born under one law and bound to another*. But the great disorder is, that our inferior faculties, our sensitive appetite and passions, are broke loose and have got head of our reason, and are upon

all occasions apt to rebel against it : but our judgment still dictates the very same things which the law of God doth injoin.

It is likewise very visible, that the sad effects of this degeneracy do not appear equally and alike in all : whether from the better or worse temper of our bodies, or from some other more secret cause, I shall not determine, because I know not : but that there is a difference is evident. For though a proneness to evil, and some seeds of it be in all, yet we may plainly discover in many very early and forward inclinations to some kinds of virtue and goodness ; which being cultivated by education, may under the ordinary influence of God's grace be carried on with great ease to perfection.

And there are others who are not so strongly bent to that which is evil, but that by good instruction and example in their tender years they may be swayed the other way, and without great difficulty formed to goodness.

There are some indeed (which is the hardest case) in whom there do very early appear strong propensions and inclinations to evil, especially to some particular kinds of vice : but the case of these is not desperate ; though greater attention and care, and a much more prudent management is required in the education of such persons to correct their evil tempers, and by degrees to bend their inclinations the right way : and if the seeds of piety and virtue be but carefully sown at first, very much may be done by this means, even in the most depraved natures, towards the altering and changing of them ; however, to the checking and controlling of their vicious inclinations. And if these persons when they come to riper years, would pursue these advantages of education, and take some pains with themselves, and earnestly seek the assistance of God's grace, I doubt not but even these persons by degrees might at last get the mastery of their unhappy tempers.

For next to the being and perfections of God, and the immortality of our own souls, there is no principle of religion that I do more firmly believe than this, that God hath that love for men, that if we do heartily beg his assistance,

assistance, and be not wanting to ourselves, he will afford it to every one of us in proportion to our need of it; that he is always beforehand with us, and prevents every man with the gracious offers of his help. And I doubt not but many very perverse natures have thus been reclaimed. For God, who is the lover of souls (as the son of Sirach calls him) though he may put some men under more difficult circumstances of becoming better than others, yet he leaves no man under a fatal necessity of being wicked and perishing everlastingly. He tenderly considers every man's case and circumstances, and it is we that pull destruction upon ourselves, with the works of our own hands: but as sure as God is good and just, no man in the world is ruined for want of having sufficient help and aid afforded to him by God for his recovery.

2. It is likewise to be considered that God did not design to create man in the full possession of happiness at first, but to train him up to it by the trial of his obedience. But there could be no trial of our obedience without some difficulty in our duty; either by reason of powerful temptations from without, or of cross and perverse inclinations from within.

Our first parents, in their state of innocency, had only the trial of temptation without; to which they yielded and were overcome; having only natural power to have resisted the temptation, without any aid of supernatural grace: and that weakness to good, and proneness to evil, which they by wilful transgression contracted, is naturally derived to us; and we necessarily partake of the bitterness and impurity of the fountain from whence we spring. So that we now labour under a double difficulty; being assaulted by temptations from without, and incited by evil inclinations from within: but then, to balance these, we have a double advantage; that a greater reward is proposed to us, than for ought we know would have been conferred on our first parents had they continued innocent; and that we are endued with a supernatural power to conflict with these difficulties. So that, according to the merciful dispensation of God, all this conflict between our inclination and our duty does only serve to give

give a fairer opportunity for the fitting trial of our obedience, and for the more glorious reward of it.

3. GOD hath provided an universal remedy for this degeneracy and weakness of human Nature : so that what we lost by the first Adam, is abundantly repaired to us by the second. This St. Paul tells us at large, Rom. v. *that as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; so the grace of GOD hath abounded to all men by JESUS CHRIST* : and that to such a degree, as effectual to countervail the ill effects of original sin, and really to enable men, if they be not wanting to themselves, to master and subdue all the bad inclinations of nature, even in those who seem to be naturally most corrupt and depraved.

And if this be true, we may without any reflexion upon GOD acknowledge, that though he did not at first create man sick and weak, yet he having made himself so, his posterity are born so. But then GOD hath not left us helpless in this weak and miserable state, into which by wilful transgression mankind is fallen : but as he commands us to be sound, so he affords us sufficient aids of his grace by JESUS CHRIST for our recovery.

And though *there is a law in our members warring against the law of our minds, and captivating us to the law of sin and death* ; i. e. though our sensitive appetites and passions are apt to rebel against the reason of our minds and the dictates of our natural conscience, yet every christian may say with St. Paul, *thanks be to GOD, who hath given us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST*. i. e. hath not left us destitute of a sufficient aid and strength to enable us to conquer the rebellious motions of sin, by the powerful assistance of that grace which is so plentifully offered to us in the gospel. And this is the case of all those who live under the gospel : as for others, as their case is best known to GOD, so we have no reason to doubt but that his infinite goodness and mercy takes that care of them which becomes a merciful creator : though both the measures and the methods of his mercy towards them, are secret and unknown to us.

4. The hardest contest between man's inclination and duty, is in those who have wilfully contracted vicious habits, and by that means, rendred their duty much more difficult to themselves; having greatly improved the evil inclinations of nature by wicked practice and custom. For the scripture plainly supposeth, that men may debauch even corrupt nature, and make themselves ten-fold more the children of wrath and of the devil, than they were by nature.

This is a case sadly to be deplored, but yet not utterly to be despaired of. And therefore those who by a long progress in an evil course, are plunged into this sad condition, ought to consider that they are not to be rescued out of it by an ordinary resolution, and a common grace of God. Their case plainly requires an extraordinary remedy. For he that is deeply engaged in vice is like a man laid fast in a bog, who by a faint and lazy struggling to get out, does but spend his strength to no purpose, and sinks himself the deeper into it: the only way is, by a resolute and vigorous effort to spring out, if possible, at once. And therefore in this case, to a vigorous resolution there must be joined an earnest application to God for his powerful grace and assistance, to help us out of this miserable state. And if we be truly sensible of the desperate danger of our condition, this pressing necessity of our case will be apt to inspire us with a mighty resolution. For power and necessity are neighbours, and never dwell far asunder. When men are severely urged and pressed, they find a power in themselves which they thought they had not. Like a coward driven up to a wall, who in the extremity of distress and despair will fight terribly and perform wonders: or like a man lame of the gout, who being assaulted by a present and terrible danger forgets his disease, and will find his legs rather than lose his life.

And in this, I do not speak above the rate of human nature, and what men thoroughly roused and awakened to a sense of their danger, by a mighty resolution may morally do, through that divine grace and assistance which is ever ready to be afforded to well-resolved minds, and such

as are sincerely bent to return to God and their duty. More than this I cannot say for the encouragement of those who have proceeded far in an evil course : and they who have made their case so very desperate, ought to be very thankful to God that there is any remedy left for them.

5. From all that hath been said, it evidently appears, how malicious a suggestion it is, that God seeks the destruction of men, and hath made his laws on purpose so difficult and cross to our inclinations, that he might have an advantage to ruin us for our disobedience to them. Alas, we are so absolutely under the power of God, and so unable to withstand it, that he may destroy us when he pleaseth, without seeking pretences for it : *for who hath resisted his will?* if goodness were not his nature, he hath power enough to bear out whatever he hath a mind to do to us. But our destruction is plainly of ourselves, and God is free from the blood of all men. And he hath not made the way to eternal life so difficult to any of us, with a design to make us miserable, but that we by a vigorous resolution, and an unwearied diligence, and a patient continuance in well doing, might win and wear a more glorious crown, and be fit to receive a more ample reward from his bounty and goodness : yea, in some sense, I may say, from his justice ; *for God is not unrighteous, to forget our work and labour of love.* He will fully consider all the pains that any of us take in his service, and all the difficulties that we struggle with out of love to God and goodness. So that this objection, from the clashing of our duty with our inclination, is I hope fully answered : Since God hath provided so powerful and effectual a remedy against our natural impotency and infirmity, by the grace of the gospel.

And though to those who have wilfully contracted vicious habits, a religious and virtuous course of life be very difficult, yet the main difficulty lies in our first entrance upon it ; and when that is over, the ways of goodness are as easy as it is fit any thing should be that is so excellent, and that hath the encouragement of so glorious a reward. Custom will reconcile men almost to

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any thing; but there are those charms in the ways of wisdom and virtue, that a little acquaintance and conversation with them will soon make them more delightful than any other course. And who will grudge any pains and trouble to bring himself into so safe and happy a condition? After we have tried both courses, of religion and profaneness, of virtue and vice, we shall certainly find, that nothing is so wise, so easy, and so comfortable as to be virtuous and good, and always to do that which we are inwardly convinced we ought to do. Nor would I desire more of any man in this matter, than to follow the soberest convictions of his own mind, and to do that which upon the most serious consideration at all times, in prosperity and affliction, in sickness and health, in the time of life and at the hour of death, he judgeth wisest and safest for him to do. I proceed to the

II. Branch of the objection, *That the laws of religion* (and particularly of the christian religion) *are a heavy yoke, laying too great a restraint upon human nature, and entrencing too much upon the pleasures and liberty of it.*

There was, I confess, some pretence for this objection against the jewish religion; which by the multitude of its positive institutions and external observances, must needs have been very burdensome. And the same objection lies against the church of Rome, who (as they have handled christianity) by the unreasonable number of their needless and senseless ceremonies, have made the yoke of CHRIST heavier than that of Moses, and the gospel a more carnal commandment than the law. So that christianity is lost among them in the trappings and accoutrements of it; with which instead of adorning religion they have strangely disguised it, and quite stifled it in the crowd of external rites and ceremonies.

But the pure christian religion, as it was delivered by our SAVIOUR, hath hardly any thing in it that is positive; except the two sacraments, which are not very troublesome neither, but very much for our comfort and advantage, because they convey and confirm to us the great blessings and privileges of our religion. In other things christianity hath hardly imposed any other laws upon

upon us but what are enacted in our natures, or are agreeable to the prime and fundamental laws of it ; nothing but what every man's reason either dictates to him to be necessary, or approves as highly fit and reasonable.

But we do most grossly mistake the nature of pleasure and liberty, if we promise them to ourselves in any evil wicked course. For, upon due search and trial it will be found, that true pleasure, and perfect freedom are nowhere to be found but in the practice of virtue, and in the service of God. The laws of religion do not abridge us of any pleasure that a wise man can desire, and safely enjoy, I mean without a greater evil and trouble consequent upon it. The pleasure of commanding our appetites, and governing our passions, by the rules of reason, (which are the laws of God) is infinitely to be preferred before any sensual pleasure whatsoever : because it is the pleasure of wisdom and discretion ; and gives us the satisfaction of having done that which is the best and fittest for reasonable creatures to do. Who would not rather choose to govern himself as Scipio did, amidst all the temptations and opportunities of sensual pleasure which his power and victories presented to him, than to wallow in all the delights of sense ?

Nothing is more certain in reason and experience, than that every inordinate appetite and affection is a punishment to itself ; and is perpetually crossing its own pleasure, and defeating its own satisfaction, by overshooting the mark it aims at. For instance, intemperance in eating and drinking, instead of delighting and satisfying nature, doth but load and cloy it ; and instead of quenching a natural thirst, which it is extremely pleasant to do, creates an unnatural one, which is troublesome and endless. The pleasure of revenge, as soon as it is executed, turns into grief and pity, guilt and remorse, and a thousand melancholy wishes that we had restrained ourselves from so unreasonable an act. And the same is as evident in other sensual excesses, not so fit to be described. We may truly say of Epicurus for this, that there can be no true pleasure without temperance in the use of pleasure. And God and his reason have set us no other bounds concerning the use

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sensual pleasures, but that we take care not to be injurious to ourselves, or others, in the kind or degree of them. And it is very visible, that all sensual excess is naturally attended with a double inconvenience: as it goes beyond the limits of nature, it begets bodily pains and diseases: as it transgresseth the rules of reason and religion, it breeds guilt and remorse in the mind. And these are, beyond comparison, the two greatest evils in this world; a diseased body, and a discontented mind. And in this I am sure I speak to the inward feeling and experience of men; and say nothing but what every vicious man finds, and hath a more lively sense of, than is to be expressed by words.

When all is done, there is no pleasure comparable to that of innocency, and freedom from the stings of a guilty conscience; this is a pure and spiritual pleasure, much above any sensual delight. And yet among all the delights of sense, that of health (which is the natural consequence of a sober, and chaste, and regular life) is a sensual pleasure far beyond that of any vice: for it is the life of life; and that which gives a grateful relish to all our other enjoyments. It is not indeed so violent and transporting a pleasure, but it is pure, and even, and lasting, and hath no guilt and regret, no sorrow and trouble in it, nor after it: which is a worm that infallibly breeds in all vicious and unlawful pleasures, and makes them to be bitter in the end.

All the ways of sin are so beset with thorns and difficulties on every side, there are so many unanswerable objections against vice, from the unreasonableness and ugliness of it, from the remorse that attends it, from the endless misery that follows it, that none but the rash and inconsiderate can obtain leave of themselves to commit it. It is the daughter of inadvertency, and blindness and folly; and the mother of guilt, and repentance and woe. There is no pleasure that will hold out and abide with us to the last, but that of innocency and well-doing. All sin is foolish; and as Seneca truly says, *Omnis stultitia laborat studio sui*; *All folly soon grows sick and weary of itself.*

The pleasure of it is slight and superficial, but the trouble and remorse of it pierceth our very hearts.

And then as to the other part of the objection, *that religion restrains us of our liberty*: the contrary is evidently true, that sin and vice are the greatest slavery. For he is truly a slave, who is not at liberty to follow his own judgment, and to do those things which he is inwardly convinced it is best for him to do; but is subject to the unreasonable commands, and the tyrannical power and violence of his lusts and passions: so that he is not master of himself, but other lords have got dominion over him; and he is perfectly at their beck and command. One vice or passion bids him go, and he goes; another, come, and he comes; and a third, do this, and he doth it. The man is at perpetual variance with his own mind, and continually committing the things which he condemns in himself. And it is all one, whether a man be subject to the will and humour of another person, or to his own lusts and passions. Only this of the two is the worse; because the tyrant is at home, and always ready at hand to domineer over him; he is got within him, and so much the harder to be vanquished and overcome.

But the service of God, and obedience to his laws is perfect liberty: Because the law of God requires nothing of us, but what is recommended to us by our own reason, and from the benefit and advantage of doing it; nothing but what is much more for our own interest to do it, than it can be for God's to command it. And though in some things God exacts obedience of us more indispensibly, and under severer penalties, it is because those things are in their nature more necessary to our felicity. And how could God possibly have dealt more graciously and kindly with us, than to oblige us most strictly to that which is most evidently for our good: and to make such laws for us, as if we live in obedience to them will infallibly make us happy? so that taking all things into consideration, the interest of our bodies and our souls, of the present and the future, of this world and the other, religion is the most reasonable and wise, the most comfortable and

compendious

compendious course that any man can take in order to his own happiness.

The consideration whereof ought to be a mighty endearment of our duty to us, and a most prevalent argument with us to yield a ready and chearful obedience to the laws of God; which are in truth so many acts of grace and favour to mankind, the real privileges of our nature, and the proper means and causes of our happiness: and do restrain us from nothing but from doing mischief to ourselves, from playing the fools and making ourselves miserable.

And therefore instead of opposing religion, upon pretence of the reasonable restraints of it, we ought to thank God heartily, that he hath laid so strict an obligation upon us to regard and pursue our true interest; and hath been pleased to take that care of us, as to set bounds to our loose and wild appetites by our duty; and in giving us rules to live by, hath no ways complied with our inconsiderate and foolish inclinations, to our real harm and prejudice: but hath made those things necessary for us to do, which in all respects are best for us; and which, if we were perfectly left to our own liberty, ought in all reason to be our free and first choice: and hath made the folly and inconvenience of sin so grossly palpable, that every man may see it beforehand that will but consider, and at the beginning of a bad course look to the end of it; and they that will not consider, shall be forced from woful experience at last to acknowledge it, when they find the dismal effects and mischievous consequences of their vices still meeting them at one turn or other.

And now, by all that hath been said upon this argument, I hope we are satisfied that Religion is no such intolerable yoke: and that upon a due and full consideration of things it cannot seem evil unto any of us to serve the Lord: nay, on the contrary, that it is absolutely necessary, both to our present peace and our future felicity: and that a religious and virtuous life is not only upon all accounts the most prudent, but after we are entered upon it, and accustomed to it, the most pleasant course that any man can take; and however inconsiderate

men may complain of the restraints of religion that it is not one jot more our duty, than it is our privilege and our happiness.

And I cannot think, that upon sober consideration any man could see reason to thank G O D to be released from any of his laws, or to have had the contrary to them enjoined. Let us suppose, that the laws of G O D had been just the reverse of what they now are; that he had commanded us, under severe penalties, to deal falsely and fraudulently with our neighbours; to demean ourselves ungratefully to our best friends and benefactors; to be drunk every day, and to pursue sensual pleasures to the endangering of our health and life: how should we have complained of the unreasonableness of these laws, and have murmured at the slavery of such intolerable impositions? and yet now that G O D hath commanded us the contrary, things every way agreeable to our reason and interest, we are not pleased neither. What will content us? as our SAVIOUR expostulates in a like case, *whereunto shall I liken this generation? it is like unto children playing in the market-place, and calling unto their companions, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned, and ye have not lamented.* This is perfectly childish, to be pleased with nothing; neither to like this nor the contrary. We are not contented with the laws of G O D as they are, and yet the contrary to them we should have esteemed the greatest grievance in the world.

And if this be true, that the laws of G O D, how contrary soever to our vicious inclination, and really calculated for our benefit and advantage, it would almost be an affront to wise and considerate men to importune them to their interest; and with great earnestness to persuade them to that which in all respects is so visibly for their advantage, *choose you therefore this day whom you will serve; G O D, or your lusts.* And take up a speedy resolution in a matter of so great and pressing a concernment; choose you this day.

Where there is great hazard in the doing of a thing, is good to deliberate long before we undertake it: but where the thing is not only safe but beneficial, and necessary

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only hugely beneficial but highly necessary ; when our life and our happiness depends upon it, and all the danger lies in the delay of it ; there we cannot be too sudden in our resolution, nor too speedy in the execution of it. That which is evidently safe, needs no deliberation ; and that which is absolutely necessary, will admit of none.

Therefore resolve upon it out of hand ; *to day, whilst it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* In the days of your youth and health ; for that is the acceptable time, that is the day of salvation : before the evil day comes, and you be driven to it by the terrible apprehension and approach of death, when men fly to God only for fear of his wrath. For the greatest atheists and infidels (when they come to die, if they have any of that reason left, which they have used so ill) have commonly right opinions about God and religion. For then the confidence as well as the comfort of atheism leaves them, as the devil uses to do witches when they are in distress. Then with Nebuchadnezzar, when they are recovered from being beasts, they look up to heaven, and their understanding returns to them : then they believe a God, and cannot help it ; they believe, and tremble at the thoughts of him. Thus Lucretius, one of their great authors, observes, that when men are in distress,

Acrius advertunt animos ad religionem ;

the thoughts of religion are then more quick and pungent upon their minds.

Nam veræ voces tum demum pectore ab imo

Eliciuntur ; & eripitur persona, manet res.

Mens words then come from the bottom of their hearts the mask is taken off, and things appear as in truth they are.

But then perhaps it may be too late to make this choice : nay then it can hardly be choice, but necessity. Men do not then choose to serve the Lord, but they are urged and forced to it by their fears. They have served their lusts all their life long, and now they would fain serve themselves of God at the hour of death. They

have done what they can, by their insolent contempt and defiance of the almighty, to make themselves miserable; and now that they can stand out no longer against him, they are contented at last to be beholden to him to make them happy. The mercies of God are vast and boundless, but yet methinks it is too great a presumption in all reason, for men to design before-hand to make the mercy of God the sanctuary and retreat of a sinful life.

To draw then to a conclusion of this discourse. If safety, or pleasure, or liberty, or wisdom, or virtue, or even happiness itself have any temptation in them, religion hath all these baits and allurements. What Tully says of philosophy, is much more true of the christian religion, the wisdom and philosophy which is from above; *numquam satis laudari poterit, cui qui pareat, omne tempus ætatis sine molestia degere possit. We can never praise it enough, since whoever lives according to the rules of it, may pass the whole age of his life* (I may add, his whole duration, this life and the other) *without trouble.*

Philosophy hath given us several plausible rules for the attaining of peace and tranquillity of mind, but they fall very much short of bringing men to it. The very best of them fail us upon the greatest occasions. But the christian religion hath effectually done all that which philosophy pretended to, and aimed at. The precepts and promises of the holy scriptures are every way sufficient for our comfort, and for our instruction in righteousness: to correct all the errors, and to bear us up under all the evils and adversities of human life; especially that holy and heavenly doctrine which is contained in the admirable sermons of our SAVIOUR, *quem cum legimus, quem philosophum non contemnimus?* whose excellent discourses when we read what philosopher do we not despise? none of the philosophers could, upon sure grounds, give that encouragement to their scholars which our SAVIOUR does to his disciples; *take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

This is the advantage of the christian religion sincerely believed and practised, that it gives perfect rest and tranquillity

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quillity to the mind of man: it frees us from the guilt of an evil conscience, and from the the power of our lusts, and from the slavish fear of death and of the vengeance of another world. It builds our comfort upon a rock, which will abide all storms, and remain unshaken in every condition, and will last and hold out for ever: *he that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them* (saith our LORD) *I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock.*

In short, religion makes the life of man a wise design, regular and constant to itself; because it unites all our resolutions and actions in one great end: whereas without religion the life of man is a wild, and fluttering, and inconsistent thing, without any certain scope and design. The vicious man lives at random, and acts by chance: for he that walks by no rule can carry on no settled and steady design. It would pity a man's heart to see, how hard such men are put to it for diversion, and what a burden time is to them; and how solicitous they are to devise ways, not to spend it but to squander it away. For their great grievance is consideration, and to be obliged to be intent upon any thing that is serious. They hurry from one vanity and folly to another; and plunge themselves into drink, not to quench their thirst, but their guilt; and are beholden to every vain man, and to every trifling occasion, that can but help to take time off their hands. Wretched and inconsiderate men! who have so vast a work before them, the happiness of all eternity to take care of and provide for, and yet are at a loss how to employ their time: so that irreligion and vice makes life an extravagant and unnatural thing, because it perverts and overthrows the natural course and order of things. For instance; according to nature men labour to get an estate, to free themselves from temptations to rapine and injury; and that they may have wherewithal to supply their own wants, and to relieve the needs of others. But now the covetous man heaps up riches, not to enjoy them, but to have them; and starves himself in the midst of plenty, and most unnaturally cheats and robs himself of that which is his own; and makes a hard shift to be as poor
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and miserable with a great estate, as any man can be without it. According to the design of nature, men should eat and drink that they may live; but the voluptuous man only lives that he may eat and drink. Nature in all sensual enjoyments designs pleasure, which may certainly be had within the limits of virtue: but vice rashly pursues pleasure into the enemies quarters; and never stops 'till the sinner be surrounded and seized upon by pain and torment.

So that take away G O D and Religion, and men live to no purpose; without proposing any worthy and considerable end of life to themselves. Whereas the fear of G O D, and the care of our immortal souls, fixeth us upon one great design, to which our whole life, and all the actions of it are ultimately referr'd, *Ubi unus Deus colitur* (saith Lactantius) *ibi vita, & omnis actus, ad unum caput, & ad unam summam refertur*; when we acknowledge G O D as the author of our being, as our sovereign, and our judge, our end and our happiness is then fixed; and we can have but one reasonable design, and that is, by endeavouring to please G O D to gain his favour and protection in this world, and to arrive at the blissful enjoyment of him in the other: *In whose presence is fulness of joy; and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore*. To him, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, now and for ever. Amen.



S E R M O N XXIX.

Of the difficulty of reforming vicious habits.

J E R E M. xiii. 23.

Can the ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.

COnsidering the great difficulty of reclaiming those who are far gone in an evil course, it is no more than needs to use all sorts of arguments to this purpose : from the consideration of the evil of sin, and of the goodness of God and his wonderful patience and long-suffering towards us in the midst of our infinite provocations : from his great mercy and pity declared to us in all those gracious means and methods which he useth for our recovery : and from his readiness and forwardness after all our rebellions to receive us upon our repentance, and to be perfectly reconciled to us as if we had never offended him : and from the final issue and event of a wicked life, the dismal and endless miseries of another world, into which we shall inevitably fall except we repent in time and return to a better mind : and lastly, from the danger of being hardened in an evil course, past all remedy and hopes of repentance.

And yet I am very sensible that to discourse to men of the impossibility, or at least the extreme difficulty of reforming themselves out of this miserable state, seems to be an odd and cross kind of argument, and more apt to drive people to despair than to gain them to repentance.

But since the SPIRIT of GOD is pleased to make use of it to this purpose, we may safely rely upon infinite wisdom

wisdom for the fitness of it to awaken sinners to a sense of their condition, in order to their recovery. For here in the text, after terrible threatnings of captivity and desolation to the people of the jews, who were extremely wicked and degenerate, through an universal depravation of manners in all ranks of men from the highest to the lowest, so that they seemed to stand upon the brink of ruin, and to be fatally devoted to it; to add to the terror and force of these threatnings, God by his prophet represents to them the infinite danger and extreme difficulty of their case, to see if he could startle them by telling them into what a desperate condition they had plunged themselves; being by a long custom of sinning so far engaged in an evil course, that they had almost cut off themselves from a possibility of retreat; so that the difficulty of their change seemed next to a natural impossibility. *Can the ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustom'd to do evil.*

The expression is very high, and it is to be hoped somewhat hyperbolical, and above the just meaning of the words. Which are, I think, only designed to signify to us the extreme difficulty of making this change; which is therefore resembled to a natural impossibility, as coming very near it, though not altogether up to it.

And that this expression is thus to be mitigated, will appear more than probable, by considering some other like passages of scripture. As, where our SAVIOUR compares the difficulty of a rich man's salvation to that which is naturally impossible, viz. to a camel's passing through the eye of a needle: nay, he pitcheth his expression higher, and doth not only make it a thing of equal but of greater difficulty; *I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* And yet when he comes to explain this to his disciples, he tells them that he only meant that the thing was very difficult, *how hard is it for these that have riches to be saved?* and that it was not absolutely impossible, but speaking according to human probability: *with men this is impossible, but not with God.*

And thus also it is reasonable to understand that severe passage of the apostle, Heb. vi. 4. *It is impossible for them that were once enlightened, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance.* It is impossible, that is, it is very difficult.

In like manner we are to understand this high expression in the text, *Can the ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil;* that is, this moral change of men, settled and fixed in bad habits, is almost as difficult as the other.

From the words thus explained two things will properly fall under our consideration.

First, the great difficulty of reforming vicious habits, of changing a bad course, to those who have been deeply engaged in it, and long accustomed to it.

Secondly, notwithstanding the great difficulty of the thing, what ground and hope of encouragement there is that it may be done. So that notwithstanding the appearing harshness of the text, the result of my discourse will be, not to discourage any, how bad soever, from attempting this change, but to put them upon it, and to persuade them to it; and to remove out of the way that which may seem to be one of the strongest objections against all endeavours of men very bad, to become better.

First, the great difficulty of reforming vicious habits, of changing a bad course, to those who have been deeply engaged in it, and long accustomed to it. And this difficulty ariseth, partly from the general nature of things indifferently considered whether they be good, or evil, or indifferent; partly, from the particular nature of good and vicious habits; and partly, from the natural and social consequences of a great progress and long continuance in an evil course. By the consideration of these three particulars, the extreme difficulty of this change, together with the true causes and reasons of it, will fully appear.

If we consider the nature of all habits, whether good, or bad, or indifferent. The custom and frequent use of any thing begets in us a faculty and easiness

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in doing it. It bends the powers of our soul, and turns the stream and current of our animal spirits such a way, and gives all our faculties a tendency and pliability to such a sort of actions. And when we have long stood bent one way, we grow settled and confirmed in it; and cannot without great force and violence be restored to our former state and condition. For the perfection of any habit, whether good or bad, induceth a kind of necessity of acting accordingly. A rooted habit becomes a governing principle, and bears almost an equal sway in us with that which is natural. It is a kind of a new nature superinduced, and even as hard to be expelled, as some things which are primitively and originally natural. When we bend a thing at first, it will endeavour to restore itself; but it may be held bent so long 'till it will continue so of itself, and grow crooked; and then it may require more force and violence to reduce it to its former straightness, than we used to make it crooked at first. This is the nature of all habits; the farther we proceed, the more we are confirmed in them: and that which at first we did voluntarily, by degrees becomes so natural and necessary, that it is almost impossible for us to do otherwise. This is plainly seen in the experience of every day, in things good and bad, both in lesser and greater matters.

2. This difficulty ariseth more especially from the particular nature of evil and vicious habits. These, because they are suitable to our corrupt nature, and conspire with the inclinations of it, are likely to be of a much quicker growth and improvement, and in a shorter space, and with less care and endeavour, to arrive at maturity and strength than the habits of grace and goodness. Considering the propension of our depraved nature, the progress of virtue and goodness is up the hill, in which we not only move hardly and heavily, but are easily roll'd back: but by wickedness and vice we move downwards; which, as it is much quicker and easier, so it is harder for us to stop that course, and infinitely more difficult to return from it.

Not but that at first a sinner hath some considerable checks and restraints upon him, and meets with several

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troubles and difficulties in his way ; the shame and unreasonableness of his vices, and the trouble and disquiet which they create to him : but he breaks loose from these restraints, and gets over these difficulties by degrees : and the faster and farther he advanceth in an evil course, the less trouble still they give him, 'till at last they almost quite lose their force, and give him little or no disturbance.

Shame is a great restraint upon sinners at first, but that soon falls off : and when men have once lost their innocence, their modesty is not like to be long troublesome to them. For impudence comes on with vice, and grows up with it. Lesser vices do not banish all shame and modesty, but great and abominable crimes harden mens foreheads, and make them shameless. *Were they ashamed* (saith the prophet) *when they committed abomination ? nay they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.* When men have the heart to do a very bad thing, they seldom want the face to bear it out.

And as for the unreasonableness of vice, though nothing in the world be more evident to a free and impartial judgment, and the sinner himself discerns it clearly enough at his first setting out in a wicked course ;

—— *Video meliora, proboque,
Deteriora sequor :*

He offends against the light of his own mind, and does wickedly when he knows better : yet after he hath continued for some time in this course, and is heartily engaged in it, his foolish heart is darken'd, and the notions of good and evil are obscured and confounded, and things appear to him in a false and imperfect light : his lusts do at once blind and bias his understanding ; and his judgment by degrees goes over to his inclinations ; and he cannot think that there should be so much reason against those things for which he hath so strong an affection. He is now engaged in a party, and factiously concerned to maintain it, and to make the best of it ; and to that end, he bends all his wits to advance such principles as are fit to justify his wicked practices ; and in all debates mainly favours that side of the question which will give

the greatest countenance and encouragement to them. When men are corrupt and do abominable works, they say in their hearts, there is no God, that is, they would fain think so. And every thing serves for an argument to a willing mind; and every little objection appears strong and considerable, which makes against that which men are loth should be true.

Not that any man ever satisfied himself in the principles of infidelity, or was able to arrive to a steady and unshaken persuasion of the truth of them, so as not vehemently to doubt and fear the contrary. However, by this means many men, though they cannot fully comfort, yet they make a shift to cheat themselves; to still their consciences and lay them asleep for a time, so as not to receive any great and frequent disturbance in their course from the checks and rebukes of their own minds. And when these restraints are removed, the work of iniquity goes on amain, being favoured both by wind and tide.

3. The difficulty of this change ariseth likewise from the natural and judicial consequences of a great progress and long continuance in an evil course. My meaning is, that inveterate evil habits do partly from their own nature, and partly from the just judgment and permission of God, put men under several disadvantages of moving effectually towards their own recovery.

By a long custom of sinning mens consciences grow brawny, and *seared as it were with a hot iron*; and by being often trampled upon, they become hard as the beaten road. So that unless it be upon some extraordinary occasion, they are seldom awakened to a sense of their guilt. And when mens hearts are thus hard, the best counsels make but little impression upon them. For they are steel'd against reproof, and impenetrable to good advice; which is therefore seldom offered to them, even by those that wish them well, because they know it to be both unacceptable, and unlikely to prevail. It requires a great deal of good-nature in a very bad man, to be able patiently to bear to be told of his faults.

Besides, that habitual wickedness is naturally apt to banish consideration, to weaken our resolution, and

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discourage our hopes both of God's grace and assistance, and of his mercy and forgiveness; which are the best means and encouragement to repentance.

Sin is a great enemy to consideration; and especially when men are deeply plunged into it, their condition is so very bad, that they are loth to think of it, and to search into it. A vicious man is a very deformed sight, and to none more than to himself; and therefore he loves to turn his eyes another way, and to divert them as much as he can from looking upon himself. He is afraid to be alone, lest his own mind should arrest him, and his conscience should take the opportunity to call him to an account. And if at any time his own thoughts meet him, and he cannot avoid consideration, he is ready to say as Ahab did to Elijah, *Haſt thou found me, O my enemy!* and is as glad to shake it off as a man is to get rid of a creditor, whom, because he knows not how to satisfy, he cares not to speak with him. Consideration is the great troubler and disturber of men, in an evil course, because it would represent to them the plain truth of their case; and therefore they do all they can to keep it off: as those who have improvidently managed their affairs, and been ill husbands of their estates, are loth to make up their accounts, lest by that means they should be forced to understand the worst of their condition.

Or if consideration happen to take them at an advantage, and they are so hard prest by it that they cannot escape the sight of their own condition, yet they find themselves so miserably entangled and hamper'd in an evil course, and bound so fast in the chains of their own wickedness, that they know not how to get loose. Sin is the saddest slavery in the world; it breaks and sinks mens spirits, and makes them so base and servile that they have not the courage to rescue themselves. No sort of slaves are so poor-spirited, as they who are in bondage to their lusts. Their power is gone, or if they have any left they have not the heart to make use of it. And though they see and feel their misery, yet they choose rather to sit down in it, and tamely to submit to it, than to make any resolute attempt for their liberty.

What the prophet says of whoredom and wine, is proportionably true of other vices, *they take away the heart*. Every lust that we entertain deals with us as Dalilah did with Sampson, not only robs us of our strength but leaves us fast bound : so that if at any time we be awakened to a sense of our condition, and try to rescue ourselves from it, we find that our strength is departed from us, and that we are not able to break loose.

And as long custom and continuance in sin deprives us of our strength, so it discourageth our hopes, both of God's grace and assistance, and of his mercy and forgiveness. For why should men expect the continuance of that grace which they have so often received in vain ? After so many provocations, how can we look the offended majesty of GOD in the face ? how can we lift up our eyes to heaven with any hopes of mercy and forgiveness there ? Despair doth almost naturally spring from an evil conscience ; and when men are thoroughly awakened to a sense of sin, and of the infinite evil of it, as they cannot easily forgive themselves, so they can hardly believe that there is goodness enough any where to forgive them.

But besides these disadvantages, which are natural and consequent upon a vicious course ; by the just judgment of GOD, his spirit is withdrawn from them, and they are given up to their own hearts lusts, to commit all iniquity with greediness. And then there is hardly any thing left, either to restrain them in their evil course, or to recover them out of it.

And not only so, but by the just permission of GOD, as men grow worse and more wicked, the devil hath a nearer access to them and more immediate power over them. So the scripture tells us, that wicked men are *led captive by Satan at his pleasure*, and that *the evil of their works and acts in the children of disobedience* : they are as it were possessed and inspired by him. And what can be expected from this cruel and malicious enemy of mankind, but that he will continually be pushing them on from one wickedness to another, 'till he drive them first into despair, and then, if GOD permit him, into eternal perdition ?

And

And what a forlorn state is this? when men are thus forsaken of God, and left without check, blindly and headily to follow the sway of their own tempers, and the bent of their own corrupt hearts? when they are continually exposed to temptations, strongly inviting them to evil; and God lets the devil loose upon them to manage those temptations with his utmost skill, and to practise all his arts and wiles upon them? In these circumstances men almost infallibly run into sin, as sure as men wander in the dark, and are in danger of falling in slippery places, and of being entangled when they continually walk in the midst of snares cunningly laid for them. It is not in men, thus disabled and entangled, to order their own steps, and to restrain their inclinations and passions in the presence of a powerful temptation. At the best, we need God's direction to guide us, his continual grace to uphold us, and to guard and preserve us from evil; and much more do we stand in need of it, when we have brought ourselves into these wretched circumstances: but then alas! how little reason have we to hope for it?

Blind and miserable men! that in despite of all the merciful warnings of God's word and providence, will run themselves into this desperate state, and never think of returning to a better mind, 'till their retreat is difficult almost to an impossibility. I proceed to the

II. Head of my discourse, which was to shew, that the case of these persons, though it be extremely difficult, is not quite desperate; but after all, there is some ground of hope and encouragement left, that they may yet be reclaimed and brought to goodness. Indeed, humanly speaking, and according to all appearance and probability, the thing seems to be very hopeless, and next to an impossibility; but yet what our SAVIOUR says concerning the difficulty of a rich man's salvation will reach also to this case, though much more difficult; *those things which are impossible with men, are possible with God.*

And this will appear, if we consider that even in the worst of men there is something left which tends to reclaim them, to awaken them to consideration, and to urge and encourage them to a vigorous resolution of a

better course : and this, accompanied with a powerful assistance of God's grace, which when sincerely sought is never to be despaired of, may prove effectual to bring back even the greatest of sinners.

1. There is left, even in the worst of men, a natural sense of the evil and unreasonableness of sin ; which can hardly be ever totally extinguished in human nature. For though the habits of great vices are very apt to harden and stupify men, so that they have seldom a just sense of their evil ways, yet these persons are sometimes under strong convictions, and their consciences do severely check and rebuke them for their faults. They are also, by fits, under great apprehension of the danger of their condition, and that the course which they are in, if they continue in it, will prove fatal to them, and ruin them at last : especially, when their consciences are thoroughly awakened by some great affliction, or the near approach of death, and a lively sense of another world. And the apprehension of a mighty danger will make men to look about them, and to use the best means to avoid it.

2. Very bad men when they have any thoughts of becoming better, are apt to conceive some good hopes of God's grace and mercy. For though they find all the causes and reasons of despair in themselves, yet the consideration of the boundless goodness and compassions of God (how undeserved soever on their part) is apt to kindle some sparks of hope, even in the most desponding mind. His wonderful patience, in the midst of our manifold provocations, cannot but be a good sign to us that he hath no mind we should perish, but rather that we should come to repentance ; and if we do repent, we are assured by his promise, that we shall be forgiven. *He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

3. Who knows what men thoroughly roused and started may resolve, and do ? And a mighty resolution will break through difficulties which seem insuperable. Though we be weak and pitiful creatures ; yet nature when it is mightily irritated and stirr'd will do strange things.

things. The resolutions of men upon the brink of despair, have been of an incredible force: and the soul of man in nothing more discovers its divine power and original, than in that spring which is in it, whereby it recovers itself when it is mightily urged and prest. There is a sort of resolution which is in a manner invincible, and hardly any difficulty can resist it or stand before it.

Of this there have been great instances in several kinds. Some by an obstinate resolution, and taking incredible pains with themselves, have mastered great natural vices and defects. As Socrates and Demosthenes, who almost exceeded all mankind in those two things for which by nature they seemed to be least made, and most unfit. One in governing his passions, and the other in the mighty force and power of his eloquence.

Some that by intemperance have brought themselves to a dropsy, which hath just set them upon the brink of the grave, by a bold and steady purpose to abstain wholly from drink for a long time together, have rescued themselves from the jaws of death.

Some that had almost ruined themselves by a careless and dissolute life, and having run themselves out of their estates into debt, and being cast into prison, have there taken up a manly resolution to retrieve and recover themselves; and by the indefatigable labour and study of some years, in that uncomfortable retreat, have mastered the knowledge and skill of one of the most difficult professions, in which they have afterwards proved great and eminent.

And some in the full career of a wicked course, have by a sudden thought and resolution, raised in them and assisted by a mighty grace of God, taken up presently, and made an immediate change from great wickedness and impiety of life, to a very exemplary degree of goodness and virtue.

The two great encouragements to virtue which Pythagoras gave to his scholars were these; and they were worthy of so great a philosopher; First, *Choose always the best course of life, and custom will soon make it the most pleasant.* The other was this, *That power and necessity*

cessity are neighbours, and never dwell far from one another. When men are prest by a great necessity, when nature is spurr'd up and urged to the utmost, men discover in themselves a power which they thought they had not, and find at last that they can do that which at first they despaired of ever being able to do.

4. The grace and assistance of God when sincerely sought, is never to be despaired of. So that if we do but heartily, and in good earnest resolve upon a better course, and implore the help of God's grace to this purpose, no degree of it that is necessary shall be wanting to us. And here is our chief ground of hope. For we are weak and unstable as water; and when we have taken up good resolutions, do easily start from them. So that fresh supplies, and a continued assistance of God's grace is necessary to keep up the first warmth and vigour of our resolutions, 'till they prove effectual and victorious. And this grace God hath promised he will not deny to us, when we are thus disposed for it; *that he will give his HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask it; that he will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed, until he bring forth judgment unto victory.*

All that now remains is to apply this to ourselves, and we are all concerned in it: for we shall all find ourselves comprehended under one of these three Heads. 3. As either we are of the number of those few happy persons who by the influence and advantage of a good education were never engaged in a bad course: or, of those who have been drawn into vice, but are not yet far gone in it; or, of those who have been long accustomed to an evil course, and are grown old and stiff in it.

The first of these have great cause to thank God for this singular felicity, that they were never ensnared and intangled in vicious habits, that they have not had the trial of their own weakness under this miserable slavery, that they never knew what it was to be out of their own power, to have lost their liberty and the government of themselves. When we hear of the miserable servitude of the poor christians in Turkey, we are apt, as there is great reason, to pity them, and to think what a blessing

of God it is to us that we are not in their condition: and yet that slavery is not comparable to this, either for the sad nature, or the dismal consequences of it; or for the difficulty of being released from it. And let such persons, who have been thus happy never to have been engaged in an evil course, preserve their innocency with great tenderness and care, as the greatest jewel in the world. No man knows what he does, and what a foundation of trouble he lays to himself, when he forfeits his innocency, and breaks the peace of his own mind; when he yields to a temptation, and makes the first step into a bad course. He little thinks whither his lusts may hurry him, and what a monster they may make of him before they have done with him.

2. Those who have been seduced, but are not yet deeply engaged in an evil course, let them make a speedy retreat, lest they put it for ever out of their power to return. Perhaps their feet only are yet ensnared, but their hands are at liberty, and they have some power left, whereby with an ordinary grace of God they may loose and rescue themselves. But after a while their hands may be manacled, and all their power may be gone; and when they are thus *bound hand and foot*, they are justly prepared, and in danger every moment, *to be cast into utter darkness*.

3. As for those, who are gone very far, and are grown in vice, who can forbear to lament over them? for they are a sad spectacle indeed, and the truest object of pity in the world. And yet their recovery is not utterly despair'd of; *for with God it is possible*. The Spirit of God, which hath withdrawn himself, or rather hath been driven away by them, may yet be persuaded to return, and to undertake them once more, if they would but seriously resolve upon a change, and heartily beg God's assistance to that purpose. If we would set up a mighty resolution, we might hope that God would afford a miraculous grace to second it, and make it effectual to our recovery. Even in this perverse and degenerate age in which we live, God hath not been wanting to give some miraculous instances of his grace and mercy

mercy to sinners, and those perhaps equal to any of those we meet with in scripture, of Manasses, or Mary Magdalene, or the penitent thief; both for the greatness of the offenders, and the miracle of their change: to the end that none might despair, and for want of the encouragement of an example equal to their own case, be disheartened from so noble an enterprise. I am loth to put you in mind how bad some have been, who yet have been *snatched as fire-brands out of the fire*; and that in so strange a manner, that it would even amaze a man to think of the wonder of their recovery: those who have sunk themselves into the very depth of infidelity and wickedness, have by a mighty hand and out-stretched arm of God been pluckt out of this horrible pit. And will we still stand it out with God, when such great Leaders have given up the cause, and have surrendered and yielded up themselves willing captives to the grace of God? that omnipotent grace of God, which can easily subdue the stoutest heart of man, by letting in so strong a light upon our minds, and pouring such terrible convictions into our consciences, that we can find no ease but in turning to God.

I hope there are none here so bad, as to need all the encouragement to repentance which such examples might give them: encouragement, I say, to repentance: for surely these examples can encourage no man to venture any farther in a wicked course: they are so very rare, and like the instances of those who have been brought back to life after the sentence of death seemed to have been fully executed upon them.

But perhaps some will not believe that there have been such examples; or if there have, they impute all this either to a disturbed imagination, or to the faint and low spirits of men under great bodily weakness, or to the natural cowardise and fear; or to I know not what foolish and fantastical design of completing and finishing a wicked life with an hypocritical death. Nothing surely is easier than to put some bad construction upon the best thing, and so slur even repentance itself, and almost dash it out of countenance by some bold, and perhaps witty saying about

But oh that men were wise ! oh that men were wise ! that they understood, and would but consider their latter end ! Come, let us neither trifle, nor dissemble in this matter ; I dare say every man's conscience is convinced, that they have led very ill lives, have so much reason for repentance, that we may easily believe it to be real. However, of all things in the world, let us not make a mock of repentance ; that which must be our last sanctuary and refuge, and which we must all come to before we die, *or it had been better for us we had never been born.* Therefore, let my counsel be acceptable unto you, break off your sins by repentance, and your iniquities by righteousness : and that instantly, and without delay ; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. If we have been enslaved but a little to a vicious course, we shall find it a task difficult enough to assert our own liberty ; to break these bands in sunder, and cast these cords from us : but if we have been long under this bondage, we have done so much to undo ourselves, and to make our case desperate, that it is God's infinite mercy to us that there is yet hope. Therefore, give glory to the LORD your GOD, before he cause darkness, and your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while you look for light, he turn it into darkness and the shadow of death. I will conclude with that encouraging invitation, even to the greatest of sinners to repentance, from the mouth of GOD himself, Isa. lv. incline your ear, and come unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live : seek the Lord while he may be found ; and call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our GOD, for he will abundantly pardon.

To him let us apply ourselves, and humbly beseech him, who is mighty to save, that he would stretch forth his right hand of his power for our deliverance, from this miserable and cruel bondage of our lusts : and that the rain cometh down from heaven, and returneth not into the sea, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud ; so he would grant that his word may not return

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turn void, but accomplish his pleasure, and prosper in the thing to which he sent it, for his mercy sake in JESUS CHRIST, to whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory now and for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XXX.

The necessity of the knowledge of the holy scriptures.

MATTHEW xxiii. 13.

Wo unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men ; and ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

THE scribes so often mentioned in the gospel were the great doctors among the jews, the teachers and interpreters of the law of God. And because many of them were of the sect of the pharisees, which above all others pretended to skill and knowledge in the law, therefore it is that our blessed SAVIOUR does so often put the scribes and pharisees together. And these were the men of chief authority in the jewish church ; who equaled their own unwritten word and traditions with the law of God. nay, our SAVIOUR tells us, *they made the commandments of God of none effect by their traditions.* They did effect assume to themselves infallibility ; and all that opposed and contradicted them, they branded with the odious name of hereticks. Against these our SAVIOUR denounces

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nounceth this wo here in the text, *wo unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, &c.*

All the difficulty in the words is, what is here meant by *shutting up the kingdom of heaven against men*: St. Luke expresses it more plainly, *ye have taken away the key of knowledge, ye entred not in yourselves, and them that were entring in, ye bindered.* By putting these two expressions together we shall the more easily come at the meaning of the text. *Ye have taken away the key of knowledge, and have shut up the kingdom of heaven against men.* This metaphor of the key of knowledge, is undoubtedly an allusion to that known custom among the jews in the admission of their doctors. For to whomsoever they gave authority to interpret the law and the prophets, they were solemnly admitted into that office by delivering to them a key and a table-book. So that by the key of knowledge is here meant the interpretation and understanding of the scriptures; and by taking away the key of knowledge, not only that they arrogated to themselves alone the understanding of the scriptures, but likewise that they had conveyed away this key of knowledge, and hid it out of the way, neither using it themselves as they ought, nor suffering others to make use of it.

And thus *they shut the kingdom of heaven against men*; which is very fitly said of those who have locked the door against them that were going in, and have taken away the key. By all which it appears, that the plain meaning of our SAVIOUR in these metaphorical expressions is, that the scribes and teachers of the law, under pretence of interpreting the scriptures, had perverted them, and kept the true knowledge of them from the people: especially those prophecies of the old testament which concerned the MESSIAS. And by this means the kingdom of heaven was shut against men: And they not only rejected the truth themselves, but by keeping men in ignorance of the true meaning of the scriptures, they hindered many from embracing our SAVIOUR's doctrines.

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and entering into the kingdom of heaven, who were otherwise well enough disposed for it.

Having thus explained the words, I shall from the main scope and design of them observe to you these two things.

1. The necessity of the knowledge of the holy scriptures in order to our eternal salvation. It is called by our SAVIOUR the key of knowledge, that which lets men into the kingdom of heaven.

2. The great and inexcusable fault of those who deprive the people of the knowledge of the scriptures. *They shut the kingdom of heaven against men*, and do what in them lies to hinder their eternal salvation; and therefore our SAVIOUR denounceth so heavy a woe against them.

I shall speak briefly to these two observations; and then apply them to those who are principally concerned in them.

I. First, I observe hence the necessity of the knowledge of the holy scriptures, in order to our eternal salvation. This is by our SAVIOUR called the key of knowledge, that which lets men into the kingdom of heaven.

Knowledge is necessary to religion: it is necessary to the being of it; and necessary to the life and practice of it. *Without faith* (says the apostle) *it is impossible to please God*: because faith is an act of the understanding and does necessarily suppose some knowledge and apprehension of what we believe. To all acts of religion there is necessarily required some act of the understanding; so that without knowledge there can be no devotion in the service of GOD, no obedience to his laws. Religion begins in the understanding, and from thence descends upon the heart and life. *If ye know these things* (says our SAVIOUR) *happy are ye if ye do them*. We must first know GOD, before we can worship him; and understand what is his will, before we can do it.

This is so very evident, that one would think there needed no discourse about it. And yet there are some

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the world that cry up ignorance as the mother of devotion. And to shew them that we do not wrong them in this matter, Mr. Rushworth in his dialogues (a book in great vogue among the papists here in England) does expressly reckon up ignorance among the parents of religion. And can any thing be said more absurdly, and more to the disparagement of religion, than to derive the pedigree of the most excellent things in the world from so obscure and ignoble an original? and to make that which the scripture calls the beginning of wisdom, and the excellency of knowledge, to be the offspring of ignorance and a child of darkness? Ignorance indeed may be the cause of wonder and admiration, and the mother of folly and superstition: but sure religion is of a nobler extraction, and is the issue and result of the best wisdom and knowledge; and descends from above, from the giver of every good and perfect gift, even the father of lights.

And as knowledge in general is necessary to religion, so more particularly the knowledge of the holy scriptures is necessary to our eternal salvation: because these are the great and standing revelation of God to mankind; wherein the nature of God, and his will concerning our duty, and the terms and conditions of our eternal happiness in another world, are fully and plainly declared to us.

The scriptures are the word of God; and from whence can we learn the will of God so well as from his own mouth? they are the great instrument of our salvation; and should not every man be acquainted with that which alone can perfectly instruct him what he must believe, and what he must do that he may be saved? this is the testimony which the scripture gives of itself, that it is *able to make men wise unto salvation*: and is it not very fit that every man should have this wisdom, and in order thereunto the free use of that book from whence this wisdom is to be learned?

II. Secondly, I observe the great and inexcusable fault of those who keep men in ignorance of religion, and take away from them so excellent and necessary a means of divine knowledge as the holy scriptures are. This our SAVIOUR calls *taking away the key of knowledge*, and

shutting the kingdom of heaven against men, that is, doing what in them lies to render it impossible for men to be saved. For this he denounceth a terrible wo against the teachers of the jewish church: though they did not proceed so far as to deprive men of the use of the holy scriptures, but only of the right knowledge and understanding of them. This alone is a horrible impiety, to lead men into a false sense and interpretation of scripture, but much greater to forbid them the reading of it. This is to stop knowledge at the very fountain-head; and not only to lead men into error, but to take away from them all possibility of rectifying their mistakes. And can there be a greater sacrilege, than to rob men of the word of God, the best means in the world of acquainting them with the will of God and their duty, and the way to eternal happiness? To keep the people ignorant of that which is necessary to save them, *is to judge them unworthy of eternal life*, and to declare it does not belong to them, and maliciously to contrive the eternal ruin and destruction of their souls.

To lock up the scriptures and the service of God from the people in an unknown tongue, what is this but in effect to forbid men to know God and to serve him; to render them incapable of knowing *what is the good and acceptable will of God*; of joining in his worship or performing any part of it, or receiving any benefit or edification from it; and what is, if this be not, to shut the kingdom of heaven against men? This is as outrageous a cruelty to the souls of men, that it is not to be excused upon any pretence whatsoever: this is to take the surest and most effectual way in the world to destroy those for whom CHRIST died, and directly to thwart the great design of GOD our SAVIOUR, *who would have men be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*. Men may miscarry with their knowledge, but they are sure to perish for want of it.

The best things in the world have their inconveniences attending them, and are liable to be abused; but surely men are not to be ruined and damned for fear of abusing their knowledge, or for the preventing of any other inconvenience whatsoever. Besides, this is to cross the way

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end of the scriptures, and the design of GOD in inspiring men to write them. Can any man think that GOD should send this great light of his word into the world, for the priests to hide it under a bushel; and not rather that it should be set up to the greatest advantage for the enlightening of the world? St. Paul tells us, Rom. xv. 4. *That whatsoever things were written, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.* And 2 Tim. iii. 16. *That all scripture is given by inspiration of GOD; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* And if the scriptures were written for these ends, can any man have the face to pretend that they do not concern the people as well as their teachers? Nay St. Paul expressly tells the church of Rome, that they were written for their learning, however it happens that they are not now permitted to make use of them. Are the scriptures so useful and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness? and why may they not be used by the people for those ends for which they were given? 'Tis true indeed they are fit for the most knowing and learned, and sufficient to make *the man of GOD perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good work,* as the apostle there tells us. But does this exclude their being profitable also to the people; who may reasonably be presumed to stand much more in need of all means and helps of instruction than their teachers? And though there be many difficulties and obscurities in the scriptures, enough to exercise the skill and wit of the learned, yet are they not therefore either useless or dangerous to the people. The ancient fathers of the church were of another mind. St. Chrysostom tells us that, *Whatever things are necessary, are manifest in the scriptures.* And St. Austin, *That things are plain in the scripture, which concern faith and a good life; and that those things which are necessary to the salvation of men, are not so hard to be come at; but that as to those things which the scripture plainly contains, it speaks without disguise like a familiar friend to the heart of the learned and unlearned.* And upon these such-like considerations, the fathers did every-where

in their orations and homilies charge and exhort the people to be conversant in the holy scriptures, to read them daily and diligently and attentively. And I challenge our adversaries to shew me where any of the ancient fathers do discourage the people from reading the scriptures, much less forbid them so to do. So that they who do it now have no cloke for their sin: and they who pretend so confidently to antiquity in other cases, are by the evidence of truth forced to acknowledge that it is against them in this. Though they have ten thousand schoolmen on their side, yet have they not one father, nor the least pretence of scripture, or rag of antiquity to cover their nakedness in this point.

With great reason then does our SAVIOUR denounce so heavy a wo against such teachers. Of old in the like case God by his prophet severely threatens the priests of the jewish church, for not instructing the people in the knowledge of God, Hosea iv. 6. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee; thou shalt be no more a priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.* God, you see, lays the ruin of so many souls at their doors, and will require their blood at their hands. So many as perish for want of knowledge, and eternally miscarry by being deprived of the the necessary means of salvation, their destruction shall be charged upon those who have taken away the key of knowledge, and shut the kingdom of heaven against men.

And it is just with God to punish such persons, not only as the occasion, but as the authors of their ruin. For who can judge otherwise, but that they who deprive men of the necessary means to any end, do purposely design to hinder them of attaining that end? And what ever may be pretended in this case; to deprive men of the holy scriptures, and to keep them ignorant of the service of God, and yet while they do so, to make shew of an earnest desire of their salvation, is just such mockery, as if one of you that is a master should tell his apprentice, how much you desire he should thrive in the world, and be a rich man, but all the while keep him ignorant

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ignorant of his trade in order to his being rich ; and with the strictest care imaginable conceal from him the best means of learning, that whereby alone he is likely to thrive and get an estate. *Wo unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites.*

By what hath been discoursed upon this argument, you will easily perceive where the application is like to fall. For the wo denounced by our SAVIOUR here in the text against the scribes and pharisees, falls every whit as heavy upon the pastors and teachers of the Roman church. They have taken away the key of knowledge with a witness ; not only depriving the people of the right understanding of the scriptures, but of the very use of them : as if they were so afraid they should understand them, that they dare not suffer them so much as to be acquainted with them.

This tyranny that church hath exercised over those of her communion for several hundreds of years. It grew upon them indeed by degrees : for as by the inundation of barbarous nations upon the Roman empire the Romans lost their language by degrees, so the governors of that church still kept up the scriptures and the service of God in the latin tongue ; which at last was wholly unknown to the common people. And about the ninth and tenth centuries, when by the general consent of all their own historians gross darkness and ignorance covered this part of the world, the pope and the priests took away the key of knowledge, and did (as I may so say) put it under the door for several ages ; 'till the reformation fetched it out again, and rubbed off the rust of it.

And I profess seriously that hardly any thing in the world was ever to me more astonishing, than this uncharitable and cruel usage of the people in the church of Rome. And I cannot tell which to wonder at most, the insolence of their governors in imposing upon men this senseless way of serving God, or the patience shall I call it, or rather stupidity of the people in enduring to be so intolerably abused. Why should reasonable creatures be treated at this rude and barbarous rate ? As if they were unworthy to be acquainted with the will of God ; and

as if that which every man ought to do, were not fit for every man to know: as if the common people had only bodies to be present at the service of GOD, but no souls; or as if they were all distracted and out of their wits, and it were a dangerous thing to let in the light upon them.

But to speak more distinctly. There are two things we charge them withal, and which they are not able to deny. Their performing the publick service of GOD in an unknown tongue; and depriving the people of the use of the scriptures. And I shall first tell you what we have to say against these things, and then consider what they pretend for them.

I. As for their performing the service of GOD in a tongue unknown to the people. And I begin with St. Paul, who in his first epistle to the Corinthians hath a whole chapter on purpose to shew the unreasonableness of this thing, and how contrary it is to the edification of christians. His discourse is so plain and so well known that I shall not particularly insist upon it. Erasmus in his annotations upon this chapter, breaks out (as well he might) into admiration at the practice of the church of Rome in his time. *Hâc in re mirum, quàm mutata sit Ecclesiæ consuetudo*: It is wonderful (says he) how the custom of the church is altered in this matter. St. Paul had rather speak five words with understanding, and so as he can teach others, than ten thousand in an unknown tongue. Why does the church doubt to follow so great an authority, or rather how dares she dissent from it?

As for the practice of the ancient church let Origen bear witness. *The Grecians (saith he) in their prayer use the Greek, and the Romans the Latin tongue; and every one according to his language prayeth unto GOD, and praiseth him as he is able.*

And not only in Origen's time, but for more than six first six hundred years, the service of GOD was always performed in a known tongue. And this the learned men of their own church do not deny. And Cardinal Cajetan (as Cassander tells us) said it was much better if custom were restored; and being reproved for saying

he said he learned it from St. Paul. And Bellarmine himself confesseth that the Armenians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Russians and others do use their own language in their liturgies at this day.

But it is otherwise now in the church of Rome, and hath been for several ages. And it seems they lay great stress upon it, not only as a thing of great use, but necessity. For pope Gregory VII. forbids the prince of Bohemia to permit to the people the celebration of divine offices in the Sclavonian tongue; and commands him to oppose them herein with all his forces. It seems he thought it a cause worthy the fighting for; and that it were much better the people should be killed, than suffered to understand their prayers.

But let us reason this matter a little calmly with them. Is it necessary for men to understand any thing they do in religion? and is not prayer one of the most solemn parts of religion? and why then should not men understand their prayers as well as any thing else they do in religion? Is it good that people should understand their private prayers? that (we thank them) they allow, and may not publick as well? Is there less of religion in publick prayers? is GOD less honoured by them? or are we not as capable of being edified and of having our hearts and affections moved and excited by them? Where then lies the difference? The more I consider it, the more I am at a loss, what tolerable reason any man can give why people should not understand their publick devotions as well as their private. If men cannot heartily devoutly pray alone, without understanding what they say of GOD, no more (say I) can they heartily devoutly join in the publick prayers which are made by the priest, without understanding what they are. If it is enough for the priest to understand them, why should it be the priest only be present at them? unless the people do not meet to worship GOD, but only to wait upon the priest. But by saying the priest understands them, it seems better somebody should understand them than not; and why is not that which is good for the priest, good for the people?

So that the true state of the controversy is, whether it be fit that the people should be edified in the service of G O D; and whether it be fit the church should order things contrary to edification? For it is plain that the service of G O D in an unknown tongue is useless and unprofitable to the people: nay, it is evidently no publick service of G O D, when the priest only understands it. For how can they be said to be publick prayers, if the people do not join in them? and how can they join in that they do not understand? and to what purpose are lessons of scripture read, if people are to learn nothing by them? and how should they learn when they do not understand? This is as if one should pretend to teach a man Greek, by reading him lectures every day out of an Arabick and Persian book, of which he understands not one syllable.

II. As to their depriving the people of the use of the holy scriptures. Our blessed SAVIOUR exhorts the jews to *search the scriptures*; and St. Paul chargeth the christians that *the word of G O D should dwell richly in them*; and the ancient fathers of the church do most frequently and earnestly recommend to the people the reading and study of the scriptures: how comes the case now to be altered? sure the word of G O D is not changed; that certainly abides and continues the same for ever.

I shall by and by examine what the church of Rome pretends in excuse of this sacrilege. In the mean time do not see what considerable objections can be made against the people's reading of the scriptures, which would not have held as well against the writing and publishing of them at first in a language understood by the people: as the old testament was by the Jews, and the epistles of the apostles by the churches to whom they were written, and the gospels both by Jews and Greeks. Were there no difficulties and obscurities then in the scriptures, capable of being wrested by the unstable and unlearned? were not people then liable to error, and was there no danger of heresy in those times? And yet these are their great objections against putting the scriptures into the hands of the people. Which is just like the

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arguing against giving the cup to the laity from the inconvenience of their beards, lest some of the consecrated wine should be spilt upon them : as if errors and beards were inconveniences lately sprung up in the world, and which mankind were not liable to in the first ages of christianity.

But if there were the same dangers and inconveniences in all ages, this reason makes against the publishing of the scriptures to the people at first, as much as against permitting them the use of them now. And in truth all these objections are against the scripture itself : and that which the church of Rome would find fault with if they durst, is, that there should be any such book in the world, and that it should be in any body's hands, learned or unlearned ; for if it be dangerous to any, none are so capable of doing mischief with it as men of wit and learning. So that at the bottom, if they would speak out, the quarrel is against the scriptures themselves. This is too evident by the counsel given to pope Julius III. by the bishops met at Bononia to consult about the establishment of the Roman see : where among other things, they gave this as their last advice, and as the greatest and weightiest of all, *That by all means as little of the gospel as might be, especially in the vulgar tongue, should be read to the people ; and that little which was in the mass ought to be sufficient : neither should it be permitted to any mortal to read more.* For so long (say they) as men were contented with that little, all things went well with them ; but quite otherwise, since more was commonly read, and speaking of the scripture, they give this remarkable testimony and commendation of it ; *This, in short, is that book which, above all others, hath raised those tempests and whirlwinds, which we were almost carried away with.* And in truth, if any one diligently considers it, and compares it with what is done in our church, he will find them very contrary to each other, and our doctrine not only be very different from it, but repugnant to it. If this be the case, they do like the rest of the children of this world prudently enough in their generation : Can we blame them for being against the scriptures, when the scriptures are acknowledged to be so clearly against them ?

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But surely no body that considereth these things would be of that church, which is brought by the undeniable evidence of the things themselves to this shameful confession, that several of their doctrines and practices are very contrary to the word of G O D.

Much more might have been said against the practice of the church of Rome in these two particulars, but this is sufficient.

I shall in the second place consider, what is pretended for them. And indeed what can be pretended in justification of so contumelious an affront to mankind, so great a tyranny and cruelty to the souls of men? Hath G O D forbidden the people to look into the scriptures? no; quite contrary. Was it the practice of the ancient church to lay this restraint upon men; or to celebrate the service of G O D in an unknown tongue? our adversaries themselves have not the face to pretend this. I shall truly represent the substance of what they say in these two points.

I. As to the service of G O D in an unknown tongue, they say these four things for themselves.

1. That the people do exercise a general devotion, and come with an intention to serve G O D, and that is accepted, though they do not particularly understand the prayers that are made, and the lessons that are read.

But is this all that is intended in the service of G O D? does not St. Paul expressly require more? that the understanding of the people should be edified by the particular service that is performed? And if what is done be not particularly understood, he tells us the people are not edified, nor can say amen to the prayers and thanksgivings that are put up to G O D; and that any man that should come in, and find people serving of G O D in this unfit and unreasonable manner, would conclude that the were mad.

And if there be any general devotion in the people, is because in general they understand what they are about and why may they not as well understand the particular service that is performed, that so they might exercise particular devotion? So that they are devout no farther

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than they understand ; and consequently as to what they do not understand, had every whit as good be absent.

2. They say, the prayers are to G O D, and he understands them ; and that is enough. But what harm were it, if all they that pray understood them also ? Or indeed how can men pray to G O D without understanding what they ask of him ? Is not prayer a part of the christian worship ? and is not that a reasonable service ? and is any service reasonable that is not directed by our understandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections ?

But then what say they to the lessons and exhortations of scripture, which are likewise read to the people in an unknown tongue ? Are these directed to G O D, or to the people only ? And are they not designed by G O D for their instruction ; and read either to that purpose or none ? And is it possible to instruct men by what they do not understand ? This is a new and wonderful way of teaching, by concealing from the people the things which they should learn. Is it not all one, as to all purposes of edification, as if the scriptures were not read, or any thing else in the place of them ? as they many times do their legends, which the wiser sort among them do not believe when they read them. For all things are alike to them that understand none ; as all things are of a colour in the dark. Ignorance knows no difference of things ; it is only knowledge that can distinguish.

They say that some do, at least in some measure, understand the particular prayers. If they do, that is no thanks to them. It is by accident if they are more knowing than the rest ; and more than the church either desires or intends. For if they desired it, they might order their service so, as every one might understand it.

4. They say that it is convenient that G O D should be served and worshipped in the same language all the world over. Convenient for whom ? for G O D ? or for the people ? not for G O D surely. For he understands all her languages as well as Latin, and for any thing we know to the contrary likes them as well. And certainly

it cannot be so convenient for the people, because they generally understand no language but their own; and it is very inconvenient they should not understand what they do in the service of God. But perhaps they mean that it is convenient for the Roman church to have it so; because this will look like an argument that they are the catholick or universal church, when the language which was originally theirs shall be the universal language in which all nations shall serve God; and by this means also they may bring all nations to be of their religion, and yet make them never the wiser; and this is a very great convenience, because knowledge is a troublesome thing, and ignorance very quiet and peaceable, rendering men fit to be governed, and unfit to dispute.

II. As to their depriving the people of the scriptures the sum of what they say may be reduced to these three heads.

1. That the church can give leave to men to read the scriptures. But this not without great trouble and difficulty: there must be a licence for it under the hand of the bishop or inquisitor, by the advice of the priest or confessor, concerning the fitness of the person that desires this privilege; and we may be sure they will think none fit, but those of whom they have the greatest confidence and security: and whoever presumes to do it otherwise is to be denied absolution; which is, as much as in the law lies, to damn men for presuming to read the word of God without their leave.

And, whatever they may allow here in England where they hold their people upon more slippery terms yet this privilege is very rarely granted where they are in full possession of their full power, and have the people perfectly under their yoke.

2. They tell us they instruct the people otherwise. This indeed were something if they did it to purpose but generally they do it very sparingly and slightly. Their sermons are commonly made up of feigned stories and miracles of saints, and exhortations to the worship of the (and especially of the blessed virgin) and of their images and relicks. And for the truth of this I appeal to

innumerable volumes of their sermons and postils in print which I suppose are none of their worst. I am sure Erasmus says that in his time in several countries, the people did scarce once in half a year hear a profitable sermon to exhort them to true piety. Indeed they allow the people some catechisms and manuals of devotion; and yet in many of them they have the conscience and the confidence to steal away the second commandment in the face of the eighth.

But to bring the matter to a point, if those helps of instruction are agreeable to the scriptures, why are they so afraid the people should read the scriptures? if they are not, why do they deceive and delude them?

3. They say that people are apt to wrest the scriptures to their own destruction, and that the promiscuous use of them hath been the great occasion of heresies. It cannot be denied to be the condition of the very best things in the world, that they are liable to be abused: health, and light, and liberty, as well as knowledge. But must all these be therefore taken away? This very inconvenience of peoples wresting the scriptures to their own ruin St. Peter takes notice of in his days; but he does not therefore forbid men the reading of them, as his most prudent successors have done since. Suppose the reading of the scriptures hath been the occasion of heresies; were there ever more than in the first ages of Christianity? and yet neither the apostles nor their successors ever prescribed this remedy. But are they in earnest? must not men know the truth for fear of falling into error? because men may possibly miss their way at noon-day, must they never travel but in the night, when they are sure to lose it.

And when all is done, this is not true, that heresies have sprung from this cause. They have generally been introduced by the learned, from whom the scriptures neither were nor could be concealed. And for this I appeal to the history and experience of all ages. I am well assured the ancient fathers were of another mind. St. Chrysostom says, *If men would be conversant in the scriptures, and attend to them, they would not only not fall into errors*

themselves, but rescue those that are deceived: and that the scriptures would instruct men both in right opinions and a good life. And St. Hierome more expressly to our purpose. That infinite evils arise from the ignorance of the scriptures; and that from that cause the most part of heresies have come.

But if what they say were true, is not this to lay the blame of all the ancient heresies upon the ill management of things by our SAVIOUR, and his apostles, and the holy fathers of the church for so many ages, and their imprudent dispensing of the scriptures to the people? this indeed is to charge the matter home; and yet this consequence is unavoidable. For the church of Rome cannot justify the piety and prudence of their present practices, without accusing all these.

But the thing which they mainly rely upon as to both these practices is this, that though these things were otherwise in the apostles times, and in the ancient church, yet the church hath power to alter them according to the exigence and circumstances of time. I have purposely reserved this for the last place, because it is their last refuge; and if this fail them they are gone.

To shew the weakness of this pretence, we will, if they please, take it for granted, that the governors of the church have in no age more power, than the apostles had in theirs. Now St. Paul tells us, 2 Cor. x. 8. that the authority which the apostles had given them from the LORD, was only *for edification but not for destruction*; and the same St. Paul makes it the business of a whole chapter to shew that the performing the publick service of GOD, and particularly praying in an unknown tongue, are contrary to edification; from which premises the conclusion is plain, that the apostles themselves had no authority to appoint the service of GOD to be performed in an unknown tongue; and surely it is arrogance for the church in any age to pretend greater authority than the apostles had.

This is the sum of what our adversaries say in justification of themselves in these points. And there is no doubt but that men of wit and confidence will always

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make a shift to say something for any thing; and some way or other blanch over the blackest and most absurd things in the world. But I leave it to the judgment of mankind whether any thing be more unreasonable than to tell men in effect, that it is fit they should understand as little of religion as is possible; that G O D hath published a very dangerous book, with which it is not safe for the people to be familiarly acquainted; that our blessed SAVIOUR and his apostles, and the ancient christian church for more than six hundred years, were not wise managers of religion, nor prudent dispensers of the scriptures; but like fond and foolish fathers put a knife and a sword into the hands of their children, with which they might easily have foreseen what mischief they would do to themselves and others. And who would not choose to be of such a church which is provided of such excellent and effectual means of ignorance, such wise and infallible methods for the prevention of knowledge in the people, and such variety of close shutters to keep out the light?

I have chosen to insist upon this argument, because it is so very plain, that the most ordinary capacity may judge of this usage and dealing with the souls of men; which is so very gross that every man must needs be sensible of it; because it toucheth men in the common rights of human nature, which belong to them as much as the light of heaven, and the air we breathe in.

It requires no subtilty of wit, no skill in antiquity, to understand these controversies between us and the church of Rome. For there are no fathers to be pretended on both sides in these questions: they yield we have antiquity on ours: and we refer it to the common sense of mankind, which church, that of Rome or ours, hath all the right and reason in the world on her side in these debates? And, who they are that tyrannize over christians, the governors of their church, or ours? who use the people like sons and freemen, and who like slaves? who feed the flock of C H R I S T committed to them, and who take the children's bread from them? Who they are that when their children ask bread, for bread give them a stone for an egg a serpent? I mean the legends of their

saints, instead of the holy scriptures *which are able to make men wise unto salvation*: and who are they that lie most justly under the suspicion of errors and corruptions, they who bring their doctrine and practices into the open light, and are willing to have them tried by the true touchstone, the word of God; or they who shun the light, and decline all manner of trial and examination? and who are most likely to carry on a worldly design, they who drive a trade of such mighty gain and advantage under pretence of religion, and make such markets of the ignorance and sins of the people; or we whom malice itself cannot charge with serving any worldly design by any allowed doctrine or practice of our religion? For we make no money of the mistakes of the people, nor do we fill their heads with vain fears of new places of torment, to make them willing to empty their purses in a vainer hope of being delivered out of them. We do not, like them, pretend a mighty bank and treasure of merits in the church, which they sell to the people for ready money, giving them bills of exchange from the pope to purgatory; when they who grant them have no reason to believe they will avail them, or be accepted in the other world.

For our parts, we have no fear that our people should understand religion too well: we could wish, with Moses, *that all the LORD's people were prophets*: we should be heartily glad the people would read the holy scriptures more diligently, being sufficiently assured that it is their own fault if they learn any thing but what is good from thence: we have no doctrines or practices contrary to scripture, and consequently no occasion to keep it close from the sight of the people, or to hide any of the commandments of God from them: we leave these means to those who stand in need of them.

In a word, there is nothing which God hath said to men, which we desire should be concealed from them: nay, we are willing the people should examine what we teach, and bring all our doctrines to the law and to the testimony; and if they be not according to this rule they may neither believe them nor us. 'Tis only thing

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false and adulterate which shun the light and fear the touchstone. We have that security of the truth of our religion, and of the agreeableness of it to the word of God; that honest confidence of the goodness of our cause, that we do not forbid the people to read the best books our adversaries can write against it.

And now let any impartial man judge whether this be not a better argument of a good cause, to leave men at liberty to try the grounds of their religion, than the courses which are taken in the church of Rome, to awe men with an inquisition; and, as much as is possible, to keep the common people in ignorance, not only of what their late adversaries, the protestants, but their chief and ancient adversary the scriptures, have to say against them.

A man had need of more than common security of the skill and integrity of those to whom he perfectly resigns his understanding; this is too great a trust to be reposed in human frailty, and too strong a temptation to others to impose upon us; to abuse our blindness, and to make their own ends of our voluntary ignorance and our credulity. This is such a folly as if a rich man should make his physician his heir; which is to tempt him either to destroy him or to let him die, for his own interest. So he that trusts the care of his soul with other men, and at the same time by irrecoverable deed settles his understanding upon them, lays too great a temptation before them to seduce and damn him for their own ends.

And now to reflect a little upon ourselves. What cause have we to bless God who are so happily rescued from that more than Egyptian darkness and bondage, wherein this nation was detained for several ages! who were delivered out of the hands of those cruel task-masters, who required brick without straw; that men should be religious without competent understanding, and work out their own salvation while they denied them the means of it; who are so uncharitable as to allow us no salvation out of their church, and yet

Yet so unreasonable as to deny us the very best means of salvation when we are in it.

Our forefathers thought it a mighty privilege to have the word of GOD restored to them, and the publick prayers and service of GOD celebrated in a known tongue. Let us use this inestimable privilege with great modesty and humility; not to the nourishing of pride and self-conceit, of division and faction; but as the apostle exhorts, *Let the word of GOD dwell richly in you, in all wisdom; and let the peace of GOD rule in your hearts, unto which ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

It concerns us mightily (with which admonition I shall conclude) both for the honour and support of our religion, to be at better union among ourselves, and not to divide about lesser things; and so to demean ourselves, as to take from our adversaries all those pretences whereby they would justify themselves, or at least extenuate the guilt of that heavy charge, which falls every whit as justly upon them as ever it did upon the scribes and pharisees, *of taking away the key of knowledge, and shutting the kingdom of heaven against men; neither going in themselves, nor suffering those that are entering to go in.*



S E R M O N XXXI.

The parable of the ten virgins.

Preached before her royal highness the princess *Anne of Denmark* at *Tunbridge-Wells*,
September 2, 1688.

MATTHEW xxv. 1, 2, &c.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

And five of them were wise, and five were foolish, &c.

MY design at present is to explain this parable, and to make such observations upon it as seem most naturally and without squeezing the parable to spring from it: and then to make some application of it to ourselves.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins: by the kingdom of heaven is meant the state and condition of things under the gospel; by the ten virgins, those who embraced the profession of it, which is here represented by *their taking their lamps and going forth to meet the bridegroom*: in allusion to the ancient custom of marriages, in which the bridegroom was wont to lead some his bride in the night, by the light of lamps or torches.

But this profession was not in all equally firm and fruitful; and therefore those who persever'd and continued steadfast in this profession, notwithstanding all the temptations and allurements of the world, and all the severe storms and assaults of persecution to which this profession was exposed; and being thus firmly rooted in it, did bring forth the fruits of the SPIRIT, and
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abound in the graces and virtues of a good life, these are the wise virgins: but those who either deserted this profession, or did not bring forth fruits answerable to it, are the foolish virgins.

And that this is the true difference between them will appear, if we consider how the parable represents them, ver. 3, 4. *They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.* So that they both took their lamps, and both lighted them, and therefore must both be supposed to have some oil in their lamps at first, as appears from ver. 8. where *the foolish virgins said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.* They had it seems some oil in their lamps at first, which kept them lighted for a little while, but had taken no care for a future supply. And therefore the difference between the wise and foolish virgins did not, as some have imagin'd consist in this, that the wise virgins had oil, but the foolish had none; but in this, that the foolish had taken no care for a farther supply, after the oil which was at first put into their lamps was spent, as the wise had done; who besides the oil that was in their lamps, carried likewise a reserve in some other vessel; for a continual supply of the lamp, as there should be occasion; *the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

Now the meaning of all this is, that they who are represented by the wise virgins had not only embraced the profession of the christian religion, as the foolish virgins also had done, for they both had their lamps lighted; but they likewise persever'd in that profession, and brought forth fruits answerable to it. For by oil in their lamps, and the first lighting of them, which was common to them both, is meant that solemn profession of faith and repentance which all christians make in baptism: by the farther supply of oil, which the wise virgins only took care to provide, is signified our constancy and perseverance in this profession, together with the fruits of the SPIRIT, and the improvement of the grace received in baptism: by the practice and exercise of all the graces and virtues of a good life, whereby men are fitted and prepared for da-

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and judgment, which are here represented to us by the coming of the bridegroom.

This being plainly the main scope and intention of the parable, I shall explain the rest of it, as there shall be occasion, under the several observations which I shall raise from the several parts of it. And they shall be these :

First, I observe the charitable decorum which our blessed SAVIOUR keeps in this, as well as in the rest of his parables ; as if he would fain suppose and hope, that among those who enjoy the gospel and make profession of it, the number of them that are truly good, is equal to those that are bad. For our blessed SAVIOUR here represents the whole number of the professors of christianity by ten virgins, the half whereof the parable seems to suppose to be truly and really good, and to persevere in goodness to the end, ver. 1, 2. *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom : and five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

Secondly, I observe how very common it is for men to neglect this great concernment of their souls, viz. a due preparation for another world ; and how willing men are to deceive themselves herein, and to depend upon any thing else, how groundless and unreasonable soever, rather than to take pains to be really good and fit for heaven. And this is in a very lively manner represented to us in the description of the foolish virgins, who had provided no supply of oil in their vessels, and when the bridegroom was coming would have furnish'd themselves by borrowing or buying of others, ver. 8, 9, 10.

Thirdly, I observe, that even the better sort of christians are not careful and watchful as they ought to prepare themselves for death and judgment : *whilst the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept ;* even the wise virgins well as the foolish.

Fourthly, I observe farther, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpose, in this great work of preparation, when it is deferred and put off to the last. Thus the foolish virgins did, and what a sad confusion and hurry they

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they were in we may see ver. 6, 7, 8, 9. *And at midnight there was a cry made, behold! the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.* At midnight; the most dismal and unseasonable time of all other: *then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps: and the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil for our lamps are gone out: but the wise answered, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.* And how ineffectual all that they could do at that time prov'd to be, we find, ver. 10, 11, 12; *And whilst they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, LORD, LORD, open to us: but he answered, and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

Fifthly, I observe that there is no such thing as work of supererogation, that no man can do more than needs and is his duty to do, by way of preparation for another world. For when the foolish virgins would have begged of the wise some oil for their lamps, *the wise answered not so; lest there be not enough for us and you.* It was only the foolish virgins that had entertained this foolish conceit, that there might be an overplus of grace and merit in others sufficient to supply their want: but the wise knew not of any that they had to spare, but supposed all that they had little enough to qualify them for the reward of eternal life; *not so, say they, μήποτε, lest at any time, lest when there should be need and occasion, all that we have done, or could do, should prove little enough for ourselves.*

Sixthly and lastly, I observe, that if we could suppose any persons to be so over-good, as to have more grace and goodness than needs to qualify them for the reward of eternal life, yet there is no assigning and transferring of this overplus of grace and virtue from one man to another. For we see, ver. 9, 10. that all the ways which they could think of, of borrowing or buying oil of others did all prove ineffectual; because the thing is in its own nature impracticable, that one sinner should be in a communion to merit for another.

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All these observations seem to have some fair and probable foundation in some part or other of this parable; and most of them, I am sure, are agreeable to the main scope and intention of the whole. I shall speak to them severally, and as briefly as I can.

First, I observe the charitable decorum, which our blessed SAVIOUR keeps in this, as well as in the rest of his parables; as if he would fain suppose and hope, that among those who enjoy the gospel, and make profession of it, the number of those who make a firm and sincere profession of it, and persevere in goodness to the end, is equal to the number of those who do not make good their profession, or who fall off from it.

I shall not be long upon this, because I lay the least stress upon it, of all the rest. I shall only take notice that our blessed SAVIOUR in this parable represents the whole number of the professors of christianity by ten virgins, the half of which the parable seems to suppose to have sincerely embraced the christian profession, and to have persevered therein to the last; *The kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom: and five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

And this decorum our blessed SAVIOUR seems carefully to observe in his other parables: as in the parable of the prodigal, Luke xv. where for one son that left his father, and took riotous courses, there was another that stayed always with him, and continued constant to his duty. And in the parable of the ten talents, which immediately follows that of the ten virgins, two are supposed to improve the talents committed to them, for one that made no improvement of his. He that had five talents committed to him made them five more, and he that had two gained other two; and only he that had but one talent, hid it in the earth, and made no improvement of it. And in the parable which I am now upon, the number of the professors of christianity, who took care to fit themselves for the coming of the bridegroom, is supposed equal to the number of those who did

And whether this be particularly intended in the parable or not, it may however be thus far instructive to us; that we should be so far from lessening the number of true christians, and from confining the church of CHRIST within a narrow compass, so as to exclude out of its communion the far greatest part of the professors of christianity; that on the contrary, we should enlarge the kingdom of CHRIST as much as we can, and extend our charity to all churches and christians, of what denomination soever, as far as regard to truth and to the foundations of the christian religion, will permit us to believe and hope well of them; and rather be contented to err a little on the favourable and charitable part, than to be mistaken on the censorious and damning side.

And for this reason perhaps it is, that our blessed SAVIOUR thought fit to frame his parables with so remarkable a bias to the charitable side: partly to instruct us to extend our charity towards all christian churches, and professors of the christian religion, and our good hopes concerning them, as far as with reason we can: and partly to reprove the uncharitableness of the jews, who positively excluded all the rest of mankind, besides themselves, from all hopes of salvation. An odious temper which to the infinite scandal of the christian name and profession, hath prevail'd upon some christians to that notorious degree, as not only to shut out all the reform'd part of the western church, almost equal in number to themselves, from all hopes of salvation under the notion of hereticks; but likewise to unchurch all the other churches of the christian world, which are of much greater extent and number than themselves, that do not own subjection to the bishop of Rome: and this they do by declaring it to be of necessity to salvation for every creature to be subject to the Roman bishop. And the supremacy of the bishop of Rome over all christian churches, Bellarmine calls the sum of the christian religion. So that the Roman communion is plainly found in schism, that is, in the most unchristian and uncharitable principle that can be, namely, *that they are the only church of CHRIST, out of which none can be saved*

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which was the very schism of the Donatists. And in this they are so positive, that the learned men of that church, in their disputes and writings, are much more inclinable to believe the salvation of heathens to be possible, than of any of those christians, whom they are pleas'd to call hereticks. The faith of the church of Rome is certainly none of the best; but of one of the greatest and most essential virtues of the christian religion, I mean charity, I doubt they have the least share of any christian church this day in the world.

Secondly, I observe, not from any particular circumstance, but from the main scope and design of this parable how very apt a great part of christians are to neglect this great concernment of their souls, viz. a careful and due preparation for another world; and how willing they are to deceive themselves in this matter, and to depend upon any thing else, how groundless and unreasonable soever, rather than to take the pains to be really good and fit for heaven. And this is in a very lively manner represented : and so in the description of the foolish virgins, who had provided no supply of oil in their vessels, and when the bridegroom was coming would have furnished themselves with borrowing or buying of others, ver. 8, 9, 10. They contented themselves, with having their lamps lighted at their first setting out to meet the bridegroom, that is, with their being admitted into the profession of christianity by baptism, but either were not stedfast in this profession, or were not careful to adorn it with the graces and virtues of a good life.

And the true reason why men are so very apt to deceive themselves in this matter, and are so hardly brought to those things wherein religion mainly consists, I mean the gifts of the spirit and the practice of real goodness; I think the true reason of this is, because they are extremely desirous to reconcile, if it were possible, the hopes of eternal happiness in another world with a liberty to live as they list in this present world : they are loth to be at the trouble and drudgery of mortifying their lusts, and governing their passions, and bridling their tongues, and practising all those duties which are comprehended in those two

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great commandments of the love of God and of our neighbour: they would fain gain the favour of God, and make their calling and election sure, by some easier way than by giving all diligence to add to their faith and knowledge the graces and virtues of a good life.

For the plain truth of the matter is, men had rather that religion should be any thing than what indeed it is, viz. the thwarting and crossing of their vicious inclinations, the curing of their evil and corrupt affections, the due care and government of their unruly appetites and passions, their sincere endeavour and the constant practice of all holiness and virtue in their lives: and therefore they had much rather have something that might handsomely palliate and excuse their evil inclinations and practices, than to be obliged to retrench and renounce them; and rather than amend and reform their wicked lives, they would be contented to make an honourable amends and compensation to almighty God in some other way.

This hath been the way and folly of mankind in all ages, to defeat the great end and design of religion, and to thrust it by, by substituting something else in the place of it, which, as they think, may serve the turn as well, having the appearance of as much devotion and respect towards God, and really costing them more money and pains, than that which God requires of them. Men have ever been apt thus to impose upon themselves, and to please themselves with a conceit of pleasing God full as well, or better, by some other way than that which he hath prescribed and appointed for them.

By this means, and upon this false principle, religion hath ever been apt to degenerate both among jews and christians, into external and little observances, and into great zeal for lesser things, with a total neglect of the greater and weightier matters of religion; and, in a word, into infinite superstitions of one kind or other, and an arrogant conceit of the extraordinary righteousness and merit of these things: in which some have proceeded to that height, as if they could drive a strict bargain with God for eternal life and happiness; and have treated him in so insolent a manner, by their doctrine of the merit

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their devotions and good works, as if God were as much beholden to them for their service and obedience, as they are to him for the reward of them; which they are not afraid to say they may challenge at God's hand as of right and justice belonging to them.

Nay, so far have they carried this doctrine in the church of Rome, as not only to pretend to merit eternal life for themselves, but likewise to do a great deal more for the benefit and advantage of others who have not righteousness and goodness enough of their own: which was the silly conceit of the foolish virgins here in the parable, as I shall have occasion to shew more fully by and by.

And it is no great wonder that such easy ways of religion and pleasing God are very grateful to the corrupt nature of man, and that men who are resolv'd to continue in an evil course are glad to be of a church which will assure salvation to men upon such terms: the great difficulty is, for men to believe that things which are so apparently absurd and unreasonable can be true; and to persuade themselves that they can impose upon God by such pretences of service and obedience, as no wise prince or father upon earth is to be deluded withal by his subjects or children. We ought to have worthier thoughts of God, and to consider that he is a great KING, and will be obeyed and served by his creatures in his own way, and make them happy upon his own terms: and that obedience to what he commands, is better and more acceptable to him, than any other sacrifice that we can offer, which he hath not required at our hands: and likewise, that he is infinitely wise and good; and therefore that the laws, which he hath given us to live by, are much more likely and certain means of our happiness, than any inventions and devices of our own.

Thirdly, I observe, that even the better and more considerate sort of christians are not so careful and watchful as they ought, to prepare themselves for death and judgment; *whilst the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.* Even the disciples of our SAVIOUR, whilst he was yet personally present with them, and after a particular charge given them from his own mouth, *Watch*

and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; yet did not keep that guard upon themselves as to watch with him for one hour: *In many things*, says St. James, *we offend all*; even the best of us: and who is there that doth not, some time or other, remit of his vigilancy and care, so as to give the devil an advantage and to lie open to temptation, for want of a continual guard upon himself? But then the difference between the wise and foolish virgins was this, that though they both slept, yet the wise did not let their lamps go out; they neither quitted their profession, nor did they extinguish it by a bad life: and though when the bridegroom came suddenly upon them, they were not so actually prepar'd to meet him by a continual vigilancy, yet they were habitually prepar'd by the good disposition of their minds, and the general course of a holy life. Their lamps might burn dim for want of continual trimming, but they had oil in their vessels to supply their lamps, which the foolish virgins had taken no care to provide. But surely the greatest wisdom of all is to maintain a continual watchfulness, that so we may not be surpris'd by the coming of the bridegroom, and be in a confusion when death or judgment shall overtake us. And blessed are those servants, and wise indeed, whose lamps always burn bright, and whom the bridegroom, when he comes, shall find watching, and in a fit posture and preparation to meet him.

Fourthly, I observe likewise, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpose, in this great work of preparation, when it is deferr'd and put off to the last. And thus the foolish virgins did: but what a sad confusion and hurry they were in at the sudden coming of the bridegroom, when they were not only asleep, but when after they were awaken'd, they found themselves altogether unprovided of that which was necessary to trim their lamps, and to put them in a posture to meet the bridegroom: when they wanted that which was necessary at that very instant, but could not be provided in an instant. I say, what a tumult and confusion they were in, when thus surpris'd, the parable represents to us at large, that 6, 7, 8, 9. and at midnight there was a cry made, *Behold, the bridegroom cometh*, that time

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the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps, that is, they went about it as well as they could; and the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.

At midnight there was a cry made, that is, at the most dismal and unseasonable time of all other; when they were fast asleep, and suddenly awaken'd in great terror, when they could not on the sudden recollect themselves, and consider what to do; when the summons was so very short, that they had neither time to consider what was fit to be done, nor time to do it in.

And such is the case of those who put off their repentance and preparation for another world, 'till they are surpris'd by death and judgment; for it comes all to one in the issue, which of them it be. The parable indeed seems more particularly to point at our LORD's coming to judgment, but the case is much the same as to those who are surpris'd by sudden death; such as gives them but little, or not sufficient time for so great a work: because such as death leaves them, judgment will certainly find them.

And what a miserable confusion must they needs be in, who are thus surpris'd either by the one or the other? How unfit should we be, if the general judgment of the world should come upon us on the sudden, to meet that great judge at his coming, if we have made no preparation for it before that time? What shall we then be able to do, in that great and universal consternation? *when the SON of man shall appear in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; when the sun shall be darken'd, and the moon turned into blood, and all the powers of heaven shall be shaken: when all nature shall feel such violent bangs and convulsions, and the whole world shall be in a combustion flaming and cracking about our ears: when the heavens shall be shrivel'd up as a scroll when it is roll'd together, and the earth shall be tofs'd from its center, and every mountain and island shall be removed; What thoughts can the wisest men then have about them, in the midst of so much noise and terror? Or if they could have any, what time will there then be to put them in execution?*

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when they shall see the angel, that standeth upon the sea and upon the earth, lifting up his hand to heaven, and swearing by him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no longer; as this dreadful day is described, Rev. x. 5, 6, and chap. vi. 15. where sinners are represented at the appearance of this great judge, not as flying to God in hopes of mercy, but as flying from him in utter despair of finding mercy with him: *The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the mighty men, and the rich men, and the great captains, bid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the earth; and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?* The biggest and the boldest sinners that ever were upon earth, shall then flee from the face of him whom they have so often blasphemed and denied; and shall so far despair of finding mercy with him in that day, who would sue to him for it no sooner, that they shall address themselves to the mountains and rocks, as being more pitiful and exorable than he; *to hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb:* from the wrath of the lamb, to signify to us that nothing is more terrible than meekness and patience when they are thoroughly provok'd and turn'd into fury.

In such dreadful confusion shall all impenitent sinners be, when they shall be surpris'd by that great and terrible day of the LORD: and the case of a dying sinner, who would take no care in the time of his life and health to make preparation for another world, is not much more hopeful and comfortable.

For alas! how little is it that a sick and dying man can do in such a strait of time? in the midst of so much pain and weakness of body, and of such confusion and amazement of mind. With what heart can he set about so great a work, for which there is so little time? With what face can he apply himself to God in this extremity, whom he hath so disdainfully neglected all the days of his life? And how can he have the confidence to hope, that God will hear his cries, and regard his tears, that a

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forced from him in this day of his necessity? when he is conscious to himself, that in that long day of G O D's grace and patience he turned a deaf ear to all his merciful invitations, *and rejected the counsel of G O D against himself.* In a word, how can he *who would not know, in that his day, the things which belonged to his peace,* expect any other but that they should now be for ever hid from his eyes, which are ready to be clos'd in utter darkness?

I will not pronounce any thing concerning the impossibility of a death-bed repentance: but I am sure that it is very difficult, and I believe very rare. We have but one example, that I know of in the whole bible, of the repentance of a dying sinner; I mean that of the penitent thief upon the cross: and the circumstances of his case are so peculiar and extraordinary, that I cannot see that it affords any ground of hope and encouragement to men in ordinary cases. We are not like to suffer in the company of the SON of G O D, and of the SAVIOUR of the world; and if we could do so, it is not certain that we should behave ourselves towards him so well as the penitent thief did, and make so very good an end of so very bad a life.

And the parable in the text is so far from giving any encouragement to a death-bed repentance and preparation, that it rather represents their case as desperate who put off their preparation to that time. How ineffectual all that the foolish virgins could do at that time did in the conclusion prove, is set forth to us at large in the parable, ver. 9, 10, 11, 12. they wanted oil, but could neither borrow nor buy it: they would then fain have had it, and ran about to get it; but it was not to be obtain'd neither by intreaty, nor for money: first they apply themselves to the wise virgins, for a share in the overplus of their graces and virtues: ver. 8. *the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out; but the wise answered, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you:* The wise virgins, it seems, knew of none they had to spare: and then they are represented ironically, sending the foolish virgins to some famous market where
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this oil was pretended to be sold; ver. 9. *go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves;* and as dying and desperate persons are apt to catch at every twig, and when they can see no hopes of being saved, are apt to believe every one that will give them any; so these foolish virgins follow the advice; ver. 10. *and whilst they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut; and afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, LORD, LORD, open to us; but he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not.*

You see how little, or rather no encouragement at all there is from any the least circumstance in this parable, for those who have delay'd their preparation for another world 'till they be overtaken by death or judgment, to hope by any thing that they can do, by any importunity which they can then use, to gain admission into heaven. Let those consider this with fear and trembling, who forget God and neglect religion all their life-time, and yet feed themselves with vain hopes by some device or other to be admitted into heaven at last.

Fifthly, I observe that there is no such thing as works of supererogation, that is, that no man can do more than needs, and than is his duty to do, by way of preparation for another world. For when the foolish virgins would have begg'd of the wise some oil for their lamps, ver. 8. *the wise answered, not so; lest there be not enough for us and you,* ver. 9. It was only the foolish virgins that in the time of their extremity, and when they were conscious that they wanted that which was absolutely necessary to qualify them for admission into heaven, who had entertain'd this idle conceit, that there might be an overplus of grace and merit in others sufficient to supply their want; but the wise knew not of any they had to spare, but supposed all that they had done, or could possibly do, to be little enough to qualify them for the glorious reward of eternal life: *not so, say they, μήποτε, lest at any time* that is, lest when there should be need and occasion, all that we have done, or could do, should be little enough for ourselves: and in this point they had been plainly in-

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instructed by the bridegroom himself, *But ye, when ye have done all, say we are unprofitable servants, and have done nothing but what was our duty to do.*

And yet this conceit of the foolish virgins, as absurd as it is, hath been taken up in good earnest by a grave matron, who gives out herself to be the mother and mistress of all churches, and the only infallible oracle of truth, I mean the church of Rome, whose avowed doctrine it is, that there are some persons so excellently good that they may do more than needs for their own salvation: and therefore when they have done as much for themselves as in strict duty they are bound to do, and thereby have paid down a full and valuable consideration for heaven, and as much as in equal justice between God and man it is worth; that then they may go to work again for their friends, and begin a new score; and from that time forwards may put the surpluse of their good works as a debt upon God, to be laid up in the publick treasury of the church, as so many bills of credit, which the pope by his pardons and indulgences may dispense, and place to whose account he pleases: and out of this bank, which is kept at Rome, those who never took care to have any righteousness of their own, may be supplied at reasonable rates.

To which they have added a further supply of grace, there should be any need of it, by the sacrament of extreme unction, never heard of in the christian church for any ages; but devised, as it were on purpose, to furnish such foolish virgins with oil, as are here described in the parable.

And thus by one device or other they have enervated the christian religion to that degree, that it hath almost quite lost its true virtue and efficacy upon the hearts and lives of men: and, instead of the real fruits of goodness and righteousness, it produceth little else but superstition and folly; or if it produce any real virtues, yet when the virtue of those virtues is in a great measure spoiled by their arrogant pretences of merit and supererogation, and is render'd insignificant to themselves by their insolent carriage and behaviour towards God.

Sixthly,

Sixthly and lastly, if we could suppose any persons to be so overgrown with goodness, as to have more than needs to qualify them for the reward of eternal life; yet there can be no assigning and transferring of this overplus of grace and virtue from one man to another. For we see that all the ways that could be thought on of begging, or borrowing, or buying oil of others, did all prove ineffectual; because the thing is in its own nature impracticable, that one sinner, who owes all that he hath, and much more, to G O D, should have any thing to spare wherewithal to merit for another.

Indeed our blessed SAVIOUR hath merited for us all the reward of eternal life, upon the condition of faith and repentance and obedience: but the infinite merit of his obedience and sufferings will be of no benefit and advantage to us, if we ourselves be not really and inherently righteous. So St. John tells us, and warns us to beware of the contrary conceit, *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

If we do sincerely endeavour to please G O D, and keep his commandments in the general course of a holy and virtuous life, the merit of CHRIST's perfect obedience and sufferings will be available with G O D for the acceptance of our sincere though but imperfect obedience. But if we take no care to be righteous and good ourselves, the perfect righteousness of CHRIST will do us no good work to do much less the imperfect righteousness of any other man who is a sinner himself. And the holiest man that ever was upon earth, can no more assign and make over his righteousness, or repentance, or any part of either, to another that wants it, than a man can bequeath his wisdom or learning to his heir or his friend: no more than a sick man can be restored to health by virtue of the plague which another man hath taken.

Let no man therefore think of being good by a deputy that cannot be contented to be happy, and to be saved the same way, that is, to go to hell, and to be tormented there in person, or to go to heaven, and be admitted to that place of bliss only by proxy. So that these good

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works with a hard name, and the making over the merit of them to others, have no manner of foundation either in scripture or reason, but are all mere fancy and fiction in divinity.

The inference from all this shall be the application which our SAVIOUR makes of this parable, ver. 13. *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the SON of man cometh*; as if he had said, the design of this parable is to instruct us that we ought to be continually vigilant, and always upon our guard, and in a constant readiness and preparation to meet the bridegroom; because we know not the time of his coming to judgment, nor yet, which will be of the same consequence and concernment to us, do any of us know the precise time of our own death. Either of these may happen at any time, and come when we least expect them. And therefore we should make the best and speediest provision that we can for another world, and should be continually upon our watch, and trimming our lamps, that we may not be surprised by either of these; neither by our own particular death, nor by the general judgment of the world: *Because the SON of man will come in a day when we look not for him, and at an hour when we are not aware.*

More particularly, we should take up a present and effectual resolution not to delay our repentance, and the reformation of our lives, that we may not have that great work to do when we are not fit to do any thing; no not to dispose of our temporal concerns, much less to prepare for eternity, and to do that in a few moments, which ought to have been the care and endeavour of our whole lives: that we may not be forced to huddle up an imperfect, and I fear an insignificant repentance; and to that in great haste and confusion, which certainly does require our wisest and most deliberate thoughts, and all the consideration in the world.

And we should provide store of oil in our vessels, wherewith to supply our lamps, that they may burn bright to the last; I mean, we should improve the grace which we receive in baptism, by abounding in the fruits of the SPIRIT, and in all the substantial virtues of a good life;

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that so an entrance may be ministred to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

By this means, when we are called to meet the bridegroom, we shall not be put to those miserable and sharking shifts which the foolish virgins were driven to, of begging, or borrowing, or buying oil; which will all fail us, when we come to depend upon them: and though the dying man may make a hard shift to support himself with these false comforts for a little while, yet when the short delusion is over, which will be as soon as ever he is step'd into the other world, he will to his everlasting confusion and trouble find the door of heaven shut against him; and that notwithstanding all his vast treasure of pardons and indulgences, which have cost him so much, and are worth so little, *he shall never see the kingdom of GOD.*

And lastly, we should take great care that we do not extinguish our lamps by quitting the profession of our holy religion upon any temptation of advantage, or for fear of any loss or suffering whatsoever. This occasion will call for all our faith and patience, all our courage and constancy,

Nunc animis opus, Ænea, nunc pectore firmo.

When it comes to this trial, we had need to gird up the loins of our minds, to summon all our forces, and to put on the whole armour of GOD, that we may be able to stand fast in an evil day, and when we have done all to stand.

And now, my brethren, to use the words of St. Peter 1 Pet. v. 12. *I testify unto you, that this is the true grace of GOD wherein ye stand.* The protestant reformed religion, which we in this nation profess, is the very gospel of CHRIST, the true ancient christianity.

And, for GOD's sake, since in this hour of temptation when our religion is in so apparent hazard, we pretend to love it to that degree, as to be contented to part with any thing for it, let us resolve to practise it; and to testify our love to it, in the same way that our SAVIOUR would have us shew our love to him, by keeping his commandments.

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I will conclude all with the apostle's exhortation, so very proper for this purpose, and to this present time, Philip. i. 27. *Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of CHRIST*, that is, chiefly and above all take care to lead lives suitable to the christian religion: and then, as it follows, *stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which to them is an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of GOD.*

Now unto him that is able to stablish you in the gospel, and to keep you from falling; and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy: to the only wise GOD our SAVIOUR, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.



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A
THANKSGIVING SERMON
FOR OUR
DELIVERANCE
BY THE
PRINCE of ORANGE.

Preached at *Lincoln's-Inn* Chapel,
January 31, 1688.

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OF THE

Honourable Society of *Lincoln's-Inn*.

THOUGH I was at first very unwilling to expose to the publick a sermon made upon so little warning, and so great an occasion; yet upon second thoughts I could not think it fit to resist the unanimous and earnest request of so many worthy persons, as the Masters of the Bench of this honourable Society; to whom I stand so much indebted for your great and continued respects to me, and kind acceptance of my labours

EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

*labours among you for now above the
space of five and twenty years. In a
most grateful acknowledgment whereof,
this discourse, such as it is, in mere obe-
dience to your commands, is now humbly
presented to you, by*

Your most obliged and

Feb. 28,
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faithful Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON

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S E R M O N XXXII.

E Z R A ix. 13, 14.

And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass; seeing that thou our GOD hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a deliverance as this:

Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not thou be angry with us 'till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?

I AM sufficiently aware that the particular occasion of these words is, in several respects, very different from the occasion of this day's solemnity: for these words were spoken by Ezra at a time appointed for publick and solemn humiliation. But I shall not now consider them in that relation, but rather as they refer to the great deliverance which GOD had so lately wrought for them; and as they are a caution to take heed of abusing great mercies received from GOD; and so they are very proper and pertinent to the great occasion of this day. Nay, these words even in their saddest aspect, are not so unsuitable to it. For we find in scripture upon the most solemn occasions of humiliation, that good men have always testified a thankful sense of the goodness of GOD to them. And indeed the mercy of GOD doth then appear above measure merciful, when the sinner is most deeply sensible of his own vileness and unworthiness. And so Ezra here, in the depth of their sorrow and humiliation, hath so great a sense of the greatness of their deliverance, that he hardly knew how to express it; *And hast given us such a deliverance as this.* And on the other hand, we find that good men, in their most solemn praises and thanksgivings, have made very serious reflexions upon their own unworthiness. And surely the best way

way to make men truly thankful, is first to make them very humble. When David makes his most solemn acknowledgments to God for his great mercies to him, how doth he abase himself before him; *but who am I, and what is my people?* 1 Chron. xxix. 4. And so likewise, after he had summoned all the powers and faculties of his soul to join in the praises of God, he interposeth this seasonable meditation, *He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities*, Psal. ciii. 10. The greater and more lively sense we have of the goodness of God to us, the more we shall abhor ourselves in dust and ashes; nothing being more apt to melt us into tears of repentance, than the consideration of great and undeserved mercies vouchsafed to us. The goodness of God doth naturally lead to repentance.

Having thus reconciled the text to the present occasion, I shall for the more distinct handling of the words take notice of these two parts in them.

First, here is a case supposed; should we, *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and since God hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hath given us such a deliverance as this; should we again break his commandments?*

Secondly, here is a sentence and determination in the case: *Wouldst thou not be angry with us 'till thou hadst consum'd us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?* This is not spoken doubtfully, though it be put by way of question; but is the more vehemently positive, the more preemptorily affirmative; as if he had said, it cannot otherwise be in reason expected, but that after such repeated provocations God should be angry with us 'till he had consumed us.

First, here is a case supposed; should we, *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasses, and since God hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hath given us such a deliverance as this; should we again break his commandments, and join affinity with the people of these abominations?* In which words these following propositions seem to be involv'd, which I shall but just mention, and pass to the second part of the text,

1. That sin is the cause of all our sufferings, *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasss.* Our evil deeds bring all other evils upon us.

2. That great sins have usually a proportionable punishment; *after all that is come upon us*, there is the greatness of our punishment; *for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasss*, there is the greatness of our sin. But when I say that great sins have a proportionable punishment, I do not mean that any temporal punishments are proportionable to the great evil of sin; but that God doth usually observe a proportion in the temporal punishments of sin, so that although no temporal punishment be proportionable to sin, yet the temporal punishment of one sin holds a proportion to the punishment of another; and consequently, lesser and greater sins have proportionably a lesser and greater punishment.

3. That all the punishments which God inflicts in this life do fall short of the demerit of our sins; and *seeing that thou our God hast punish'd us less than our iniquities deserve.* In the Hebrew it is, *and hast kept down our iniquities*, that is, that they should not rise up against us. The LXX. expresseth it very emphatically, *thou hast eased us of our sins*, that is, thou hast not let the whole weight of them fall upon us. Were it not for the restraints which God puts upon his anger, and the merciful mitigations of it, the sinner would not be able to bear it, but must sink under it. Indeed it is only said in the Text, that the punishment which God inflicted upon the jews, though it was a long captivity, was beneath the desert of their sins: but yet it is universally true, and Ezra perhaps might intend to insinuate so much, that all temporal punishments, though never so severe, are always less than our iniquities deserve.

4. That God many times works very great deliverances for those who are very unworthy of them; and *given us such a deliverance as this, notwithstanding our evil deeds, and notwithstanding our great trespasss.*

5. That we are but too apt, even after great judgments, and after great mercies, to relapse into our former sins; *and we again break thy commandments.* Ezra insinuates that

that there was great reason to fear this, especially considering the strange temper of that people, who when God multiply'd his blessings upon them, were so apt to *wax fat and kick against him*; and though he had cast them several times into the furnace of affliction, though they were melted for the present, yet they were many times but the harder for it afterwards.

6. That it is good to take notice of those particular sins which have brought the judgments of God upon us. So Ezra does here; *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass; and, should we again join in affinity with the people of these abominations?*

Secondly, here is a sentence and determination in the case; *wouldst thou not be angry with us 'till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping?* Which question, as I said before, doth imply a strong and peremptory affirmative; as if he had said, after such a provocation there is great reason to conclude that God would be angry with us 'till he had consumed us.

From whence the observation contained in this part of the text will be this, *That it is a fearful aggravation of sin, and a sad presage of ruin to a people, after great judgments and great deliverances, to return to sin, and especially to the same sins again.* Hear how passionately Ezra expresses himself in this case, ver. 6. *I am ashamed, O God, and blush to lift up mine eyes to thee, my God.* Why? what was the cause of this great shame and confusion of face? He tells us, ver. 9. *for we were bondsmen, yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended his mercy to us, to give us a reviving, to bring us up the house of our God, and to repair the desolation thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem;* that is, to restore them the free and safe exercise of their religion. Here was great mercy and a mighty deliverance indeed; and yet after this they presently relapsed into a very great sin, ver. 10. *And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments.*

In handling of this observation, I shall do these things,

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First, I shall endeavour to shew that this is a very heavy aggravation of sin, and

Secondly, that it is a fatal presage of ruin to a people.

First, it is a heavy aggravation of sin after great judgments, and after signal mercies and deliverances to return to sin, and especially to the same sins again. Here are three things to be distinctly spoken to.

1. That it is a great aggravation of sin to return to it after great judgments.

2. To do this after great mercies and deliverances.

3. After both to return to the same sins again.

1. It is a great aggravation of sin after great judgments have been upon us to return to an evil course: because this is an argument of great obstinacy in evil. The longer Pharaoh resisted the judgments of God, the more was his wicked heart hardned, 'till at last he arrived at a monstrous degree of hardness, having been, as the text tells us, hardned under ten plagues. And we find, that after God had threaten'd the people of Israel with several judgments, he tells them, that if they *will not be reformed by all these things, he will punish them seven times more for their sins*, Lev. xxvi. 13. And if the just God will in such a case punish seven times more, we may conclude that the sin is seven times greater.

What sad complaints doth the prophet make of the people of Israel growing worse for judgments; *Ab! sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, children that have conceived corrupters, a seed of evil doers*, Isaiah i. iv. He can hardly find words enough to express how great sinners they were; and he adds the reason in the next verse, *Why should they be smitten any more? they will revolt more and more*, Isaiah v. 5. They were but the worse for judgments. This renders them *a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity*. And again, *the people turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they fear the LORD of hosts; therefore his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still*, Isaiah ix. 13.

The same prophet further complains to the same purpose, *When thy hand is lifted up, they will not see*, Isaiah lxiii. 11. There is a particular brand set upon king Zedekiah, because affliction made him worse: *This is that*

king *Ahaz*, that is, that grievous and notorious sinner. And what was it that render'd him so? *in the time of his distress he sinned yet more against the LORD*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. this is that king *Ahaz*, who is said to have provoked the LORD above all the kings of Israel which were before him.

2. It is likewise a fore aggravation of sin, when it is committed after great mercies and deliverances vouchsafed to us. Because this is an argument of great ingratitude. And this we find recorded as a heavy charge upon the people of Israel, *that they remembered not the LORD their God, who had delivered them out of the hand of all their enemies on every side; neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, who had been their deliverer, according to all the goodness which he had shewed to Israel*, Judg. viii. 34, 35. GOD, we see, takes it very ill at our hands, when we are ungrateful to the instruments of our deliverance; but much more when we are unthankful to him the author of it. And how severely doth Nathan the prophet reproach David upon this account? *Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and delivered thee out of the hand of Saul, &c. and if this had been too little, I would moreover have done such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD to do evil in his sight?* GOD here reckons up his manifold mercies and deliverances, and aggravates David's sin upon this account. And he was very angry likewise with Solomon for the same reason, *because he had turned from the LORD GOD of Israel, who had appear'd to him twice*, 1 Kings xi. 9. However we may slight the mercies of GOD, he keeps punctual and strict account of them. It is particularly noted, as a great blot upon Hezekiah, *that he returned not according to the benefits done unto him*, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. GOD takes very severe notice of all the unkind and unworthy returns that are made to him for his goodness.

Ingratitude to GOD is so unnatural and monstrous, that we find him appealing against us for it to the inanimate creatures. *Hear O heavens! and give ear O earth!* *for the LORD hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up*

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children, but they have rebelled against me, Isa. i. 2. And then he goes on and upbraids them with the brute creatures, as being more grateful to men, than men are to God. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider,* ver. 3. And in the same prophet there is the like complaint, *Let favour be shewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness. In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD. LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see and be ashamed,* Isaiah xxvi. 10. They that will not acknowledge the mercies of God's providence, shall feel the strokes of his justice.

There is no greater evidence in the world of an untractable disposition, than not to be wrought upon by kindness, not to be melted by mercies, not to be obliged by benefits, not to be tamed by gentle usage. Nay, God expects that his mercies should lay so great an obligation upon us, that even a miracle should not tempt us to be unthankful. *If there arise among you a prophet, says Moses to the people of Israel, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder cometh to pass, whereof he spake to thee, saying, let us go after other gods and serve them; thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet,* Deut. xiii. 1, 2. And he gives the reason, *because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD GOD of Israel, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and delivered you out of the house of bondage,* ver. 5.

3. It is a greater aggravation yet, after great mercies and judgments to return to the same sins. Because this can hardly be without our sinning against knowledge, and after we are convinced how evil and bitter the sin is which we were guilty of, and have been so forcibly punish'd for before. This is an argument of a very perverse and incorrigible temper, and that which made the sin of the people of Israel so above measure sinful, that after so many signal deliverances, and so many terrible judgments, they fell into the same sin of murmuring ten times; murmuring against God the author, and against Moses the glo-

rious instrument of their deliverance out of Egypt ; which was one of the two great types of the old testament, both of temporal and spiritual oppression and tyranny. Hear with what resentment God speaks of the ill returns which they made to him for that great mercy and deliverance. *Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened unto my voice ; surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers,* Numb. xiv. 22. And after he had brought them into the promised land, and wrought great deliverances for them several times, how does he upbraid them with their proneness to fall again into the same sin of idolatry ? *And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites ; from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines ? The Zidonians also and the Amalekites and Maonites did oppress you ; and ye cried unto me, and I delivered you out of their hand : yet you have forsaken me, and served other gods ; wherefore I will deliver you no more : go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation,* Judges x. 11, 12, 13, 14. This incensed God so highly against them, that they still relaps'd into the same sin of idolatry, after so many afflictions and so many deliverances. Upon such an occasion well might the prophet say, *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy sins shall reprove thee : know therefore that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy GOD,* Jer. ii. 19. It is hardly possible but we should know that the wickedness for which we have been so severely corrected is an evil and bitter thing.

Thus much for the first part of the observation, namely, that it is a fearful aggravation of sin, after great judgments and great deliverances to return to sin, and especially to the same sins again. I proceed to the

Second part, namely, that this is a fatal presage of ruin to a people ; *should we again break thy commandments and join in affinity with the people of these abominations wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hadst consumed*

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us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? and so God threatens the people of Israel in the text which I cited before, *wherefore I will deliver you no more*, Judges x. 13. Wherefore, that is, because they would neither be re'orm'd by the afflictions wherewith God had exercised them, nor by the many wonderful deliverances which he had wrought for them.

And there is great reason why God should deal thus with a people that continues impenitent both under the judgments and mercies of God.

1. Because this doth ripen the sins of a nation; and it is time for God to put in his sickle when a people are ripe for ruin. When the measure of their sins is full, it is no wonder if the cup of his indignation begin to overflow. It is said of the Amorites, four hundred years before God brought that fearful ruin upon them, that God deferr'd the extirpation of them, *because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full*, Gen. xv. 16. When neither the mercies nor the judgments of God will bring us to repentance, we are then fit for destruction; according to that of the apostle, *What if God willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?* Rom. ix. 22. they who are not wrought upon neither by the patience of God's mercies, nor by the patience of his judgments, seem to be fitted and prepared, to be ripe and ready for destruction.

2. Because this incorrigible temper shews the case of such persons to be desperate and incurable. *Why should they be smitten any more?* says God of the people of Israel, *they will revolt more and more*, Isaiah i. 5. *How often would I have gathered you*, says our blessed SAVIOUR to the Jews, *even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings?* and ye would not! Behold, your house left to you desolate, Matth. xxiii. 37, 38. that is, ye shall be utterly destroyed; as it happen'd forty years after Jerusalem, and to the whole jewish nation.

When God sees that all the means which he can use prove ineffectual and to no purpose, he will then give up a people, as physicians do their patients when they

see that nature is spent, and their case past remedy. When men will not be the better for the best means that heaven can use, God will then leave them to reap the fruit of their own doings, and abandon them to the demerit of their sin.

That which now remains is to apply this to ourselves, and to the solemn occasion of this day.

And if this be our case, let us take heed that this be not also our doom and sentence,

First, the case in the text doth very much resemble ours. And that in three respects. God hath sent great judgments upon us for our evil deeds and for our great trespasses; *he hath punished us less than our iniquities have deserved*: and hath given us a very great and wonderful deliverance.

I. God hath inflicted great judgments upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespasses. Great judgments, both for the quality, and for the continuance of them. It shall suffice only to mention those which are of a more ancient date. Scarcely hath any nation been more calamitous than this of ours, both in respect of the invasions and conquests of foreigners, and of our own civil and intestine divisions. Four times we have been conquer'd; by the Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans. And our intestine divisions have likewise been great and of long continuance. Witness the barons wars, and that long and cruel contest between the two houses of York and Lancaster.

But to come nearer to our own times, what fearful judgments and calamities of war, and pestilence, and fire have many of us seen? and how close did they follow one another? what terrible havock did the sword make amongst us for many years? and this not the sword of a foreign enemy, but of a civil war; the mischiefs whereof were all terminated upon ourselves, and have given deep wounds, and left broad scars upon the most considerable families in the nation.

—*Alta manent civilis vulnera dextrae.*

This war was drawn out to a great length, and had a tragical end, in the murder of an excellent king; and in the

banishment of his children into a strange country, whereby they were exposed to the arts and practices of those of another religion; the mischievous consequences whereof we have ever since sadly labour'd under, and do feel them at this day.

And when God was pleas'd in great mercy at last to put an end to the miserable distractions and confusions of almost twenty years, by the happy restoration of the royal family, and our ancient government; which seem'd to promise to us a lasting settlement, and all the felicities we could wish; yet how soon was this bright and glorious morning overcast, by the restless and black designs of that sure and inveterate enemy of ours, the church of Rome, for the restoring of their religion amongst us. And there was too much encouragement given to this design, by those who had power in their hands, and had brought home with them a secret good-will to it.

For this great trespass, and for our many other sins, God was angry with us, and sent among us the most raging pestilence that ever was known in this nation, which in the space of eight or nine months swept away near a third part of the inhabitants of this vast and populous city, and of the suburbs thereof: besides a great many thousands more in several parts of the nation. *But we did not return to the LORD, nor seek him for all this.*

And therefore, the very next year after, God sent a terrible and devouring fire, which in less than three days of time laid the greatest part of this great city in ashes. And there is too much reason to believe that the enemy did this, that perpetual and implacable enemy of the peace and happiness of this nation.

And even since the time of that dreadful calamity, which is now above twenty years ago, we have been in continual fear of the cruel designs of that party, which had hitherto been incessantly working under ground, but now began to shew themselves more openly; and especially since a prince of that religion succeeded to the crown, our eyes have been ready to fail us for fear, and looking after those dreadful things that were coming upon

upon us, and seem'd to be even at the door. A fear which this nation could easily have rid itself of, because they that caused it were but a handful in comparison of us, and could have done nothing without a foreign force and assistance; had not the principles of humanity, and of our religion too, restrain'd us from violence and cruelty, and from every thing which had the appearance of undutifulness to the government which the providence of God had set over us. An instance of the like patience, under the like provocations, for so long a time, and after such visible and open attempts upon them, when they had the laws so plainly on their side, I challenge any nation or church in the world, from the very foundation of it, to produce. Inasmuch, that if God had not put it into the hearts of our kind neighbours, and of that incomparable prince, who laid and conducted that great design with so much skill and secrecy, to have appear'd so seasonably for our rescue, our patience had infallibly, without a miracle, been our ruin. And I am sure, if our enemies had ever had the like opportunity in their hands, and had overbalanced us in numbers but half so much as we did them, they would never have let it slip; but would long since have extirpated us utterly, and have made the remembrance of us to have ceas'd among men.

And now if you ask me, for what sins more especially God hath sent all these judgments upon us? it will not I think, become us to be very particular and positive in such determinations. Thus much is certain, that we have all sinn'd and contributed to these judgments; every one hath had some hand, more or less, in pulling down this vengeance upon the nation. But we are all too apt to remove the meritorious cause of God's judgments as far as we can from ourselves, and our own party, and upon any slight pretence to lay it upon others.

Yet I will venture to instance in one or two things which may probably enough have had a more particular and immediate hand in drawing down the judgments of God upon us.

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it on the other, by our gross hypocrisy, and sheltering great wickedness and immoralities under the cloke and profession of religion.

And then, great dissensions and divisions, great uncharitableness and bitterness of spirit among those of the same religion; so that almost from the beginning of our happy reformation the enemy had sown these tares, and by the unwearied malice and arts of the church of Rome, the seeds of dissension were scattered very early amongst us; and a four humour had been fermenting in the body of the nation, both upon account of religion and civil interests, for a long time before things broke out into a civil war.

And more particularly yet: that which is call'd the great trespass here in the text, their joining in affinity with the people of these abominations, by whom they had been detain'd in a long captivity: this, I say, seems to have had, both from the nature of the thing, and the just judgment of God, no small influence upon a great part of the miseries and calamities which have befallen us. For had it not been for the countenance which popery had by the marriages and alliances of our princes, for two or three generations together, with those of that religion, had not probably had a continuance among us to this day. Which will, I hope, now be a good warning to those, who have the authority to do it, to make effectual provision by law, for the prevention of the like inconvenience and mischief in this nation for ever.

2. Another parallel between our case and that in the text, is, *that God hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve.* And this acknowledgment we have as much reason to make for ourselves, as Ezra had to do it in behalf of the Jews, *Thou our God hast punish'd us less than our iniquities deserve.* Thou, our God, hast punish'd us: there is the reason of so much mercy and mitigation. It is God, and not man, with whom we have to do: therefore it is that we *the children of men are not counted.* And it is our God likewise, to whom we have a peculiar relation, and with whom, by virtue of our profession of christianity, we are in covenant: thou our
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GOD hath punished less than our iniquities deserve. He might justly have *pour'd forth all his wrath, and have made his jealousy to have smoked against us, and have blot- ted out the remembrance of us from under heaven: he might have given us up to the will of our enemies, and into the hands of those whose tender mercies are cruelty: he might have brought us into the net which they had spread for us, and have laid a terrible load of affliction upon our loins, and suffer'd insolent men to ride over our heads, and them that hated us with a perfect hatred, to have had the rule over us: but he was graciously pleased to remember mercy in the midst of judgment, and to repent himself for his servants, when he saw that their power was gone, and that things were come to that extremity, that we were in all human probability utterly unable to have wrought out our own deliverance.*

3. The last parallel between our case, and that in the text is the great and wonderful deliverance which GOD hath wrought for us. And while I am speaking of this, GOD is my witness, whom I serve in the gospel of his SON, that I do not say one word upon this occasion in flattery to men, but in true thankfulness to almighty GOD, and constrained thereto from a just sense of his great mercy to us all, in this marvellous deliverance, in this mighty deliverance which he wrought for us. So that we may say with Ezra, *Since thou our GOD hast given us such a deliverance as this: so great, that we know not how to compare it to any thing but itself. GOD hath given us this deliverance. And therefore, Not unto us, O LORD, praise be unto us, but to thy name be the praise.* For thou knowest and we are conscious to ourselves, that we did in no way deserve it, but quite the contrary. GOD hath given it, and it ought to be so much the welcomer to us, for coming from such a hand. It is the LORD's doing, and therefore ought to be the more marvellous in our eyes. This deliverance full of mercy, and I had almost said, full of miracle. The finger of GOD was visibly in it; and there are plain signatures and characters upon it, of a more immediate divine interposition. And if we will not wonder at the LORD's doing, we have reason to stand

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awe of that threatning of his, Pſal. xxviii. 5. *Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he ſhall deſtroy them, and not build them up.*

It was a wonderful deliverance indeed, if we conſider all the circumſtances of it: the greatneſs of it; and the ſtrangenefs of the means whereby it was brought about; and the ſuddenneſs and eaſineſs of it.

The greatneſs of it; it was a great deliverance, from the greateſt fears, and from the greateſt dangers; the apparent and imminent danger of the ſaddeſt thralldom and bondage, civil and ſpiritual; both of ſoul and body.

And it was brought about in a very extraordinary manner, and by very ſtrange means: whether we conſider the greatneſs and difficulty of the enterpriſe; or the cloſeneſs and ſecrecy of the deſign, which muſt of neceſſity be communicated at leaſt to the chief of thoſe who were to ſiſt and engage in it: eſpecially the ſtates of the United Provinces, who were then in ſo much danger themſelves, and wanted more than their own forces for their own defence and ſecurity: a kindneſs never to be forgotten by the Engliſh nation. And beſides all this, the difficulties and diſappointments which happened, after the deſign was ſeen and manifeſt, from the uncertainties of wind and weather, and many other accidents impoſſible to be foreſeen and prevented. And yet in concluſion a ſtrange concurrence of all things, on all ſides, to bring the thing which the providence of GOD intended to a happy iſſue and effect.

And we muſt not here forget the many worthies of our nation, who did ſo generously run all hazards of life and fortune, for the preſervation of our religion, and the aſſerting of our ancient laws and liberties.

Theſe are all ſtrange and unuſual means; but, which ſtranger yet, the very counſels and methods of our enemies did prepare the way for all this, and perhaps more effectually, than any counſel and contrivance of our ſides could have done it. For even the jeſuits, thoſe ſubtle politicians by book and rule, without any conſideration or true knowledge of the temper, and intereſt, and other circumſtances of the people they were deſigning
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upon, and had to deal withal; and indeed without any care to know them: I say, the jesuits, who for so long a time, and for so little reason, have affected the reputation of the deepest and craftiest statesmen in the world, have upon this great occasion, and when their whole kingdom of darkness lay at stake, by a more than ordinary infatuation and blindness, so outwitted and overreach'd themselves in their own counsels, that they have really contributed as much, or more, to our deliverance from the destruction which they had designed to bring upon us, than all our wisest and best friends could have done.

And then if we consider further, how sudden and surprising it was, so that we could hardly believe it when it was accomplish'd; and like the children of Israel, *when the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.* When all things were driving on furiously, and in great haste, then G O D gave an unexpected check to the designs of men, and stopp'd them in their full career. Who among us could have imagin'd, but a few months ago, so happy and so speedy an end of our fears and troubles? G O D hath at once scatter'd all our fears, and outdone all our hopes by the greatness and suddenness of our deliverance. *O that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*

And lastly, if we consider the cheapness and easiness of this deliverance. All this was done without a battle, almost without blood. All the danger is, lest we should loath it, and grow sick of it, because it was so very easy. Had it come upon harder terms, and had we waded through a red sea of blood, we would have valued it more. But this surely is great wantonness, and whatever we think of it, one of the highest provocations imaginable: for there can hardly be a fouler and blacker ingratitude towards almighty G O D, than to slight so great a deliverance, only because it came to us so easily, and hath cost us so very cheap.

I will mention but one circumstance more, which will not be altogether unworthy our observation. That G O D

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seems in this last deliverance, in some sort to have united and brought together all the great deliverances which he hath been pleased to work for this nation against all the remarkable attempts of popery, from the beginning of our reformation. Our wonderful deliverance from the formidable Spanish invasion design'd against us, happen'd in the year 1588. And now just a hundred years after, GOD was pleased to bring about this last great and most happy deliverance. That horrid gunpowder conspiracy, without precedent, and without parallel, was designed to have been executed upon the fifth day of November; the same day upon which his highness the prince of Orange landed the forces here in England which he brought hither for our rescue. So that this is a day every way worthy to be solemnly set apart and joyfully celebrated by this church and nation, throughout all generations; as the fittest of all other to comprehend, and to put us in mind to commemorate all the great deliverances which GOD hath wrought for us, from popery, and its inseparable companion, arbitrary power. And we may then say with the holy psalmist, *This is the LORD's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it,* Psal. cxviii. 23, 24.

Secondly, as the case in the text is much like ours, so let us take heed that the doom and sentence there be not too. *If after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, and since GOD has punish'd us less than our iniquities did deserve; should we again break his commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations, would he not be angry with us 'till he had consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor used fleeing?* What could we in reason expect after all this, without utter ruin and destruction? We may here apply, as is int. Paul does, GOD's dealing with the people of Israel, to the times of the gospel; for he speaks of it as an example and admonition to all ages to the end of the world. *Now these things,* says the apostle, *1 Cor. x. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted; neither be ye idolaters, as some of them, &c. neither let us tempt CHRIST,*

as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. For the explication of this passage we must have recourse to the history, Numb. xxi. 5, 6. which gives this account of it. *And the people spake against GOD, and against Moses, wherefore have ye brought us out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness? &c.* impeaching GOD and his servant Moses, as if by this deliverance they had put them into a much worse condition than they were in when they were in Egypt. *And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died.* But how was this a tempting of CHRIST? *Neither let us tempt CHRIST, as some of them also tempted;* that is, let not us, now under the gospel, tempt our saviour and deliverer, as the Israelites did theirs, by slighting that great deliverance, and by speaking against GOD, and against Moses. *Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.* And how far this may concern us, and all others, to the end of the world, who shall tempt CHRIST, the great patron and deliverer of his church, and murmur without cause, as the Israelites did, at the deliverance which he works for them, and against the instruments of it, the apostle tells us in the next words, ver. 11. *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, or types; and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come.* Let us not tempt CHRIST; who is now beginning the glorious deliverance of his church from the tyranny of antichrist.

To draw now towards a conclusion; I will comprehend my advice to you upon the whole matter, in as few words as I can.

Let us use this great deliverance which GOD hath given us, [such a deliverance as this] from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us; not by using them as they would have done us, had we fallen under their power with great insolence and rage, and cruelty; but with great moderation and clemency, making as few examples of severity as will be consistent with our future security from the like attempts upon our religion and laws: and even in the execution of justice upon the greatest offenders, that purpo

us not give so much countenance to the ill examples which have been set of extravagant fines and punishments, as to imitate those patterns which with so much reason we abhor; no, not in the punishment of the authors of them.

And let us endeavour, for once, to be so wise, as not to forfeit the fruits of this deliverance, and to hinder ourselves of the benefit and advantage of it, by breaches and divisions among ourselves. As we have no reason to desire it, so I think we can hardly ever hope to understand popery better, and the cruel designs of it, than we do already, both from the long trial and experience which we have had of it in this nation, and likewise from that dismal and horrid view which hath of late been given us of the true spirit and temper of it in one of our neighbour nations, which hath long pretended to the profession of the most refined and moderate popery in the world; but hath now at last shewed itself in its true colours, and in the perfection of a persecuting spirit; and have therein given us a most sad and deplorable instance of a religion corrupted and degenerated into that which, if it be possible, is worse than none.

And since, by the undeserved mercy of God to us, we have, upon such easy terms in comparison, escaped their rage and fury; let us now at length resolve, never to join in affinity with the people of these abominations; since our alliances with them by marriage have had so fatal an influence, both upon the publick peace and tranquillity of the nation, and upon the welfare also of private families. I have known many instances of this kind, but hardly ever yet saw one that proved happy; but a great many that have been pernicious and ruinous to those protestant families in which such unequal, and, as I think, unlawful matches have been made: not that such marriages are void in themselves, but yet for all that sinful; because of the apparent danger and temptation to which those of our church and religion that enter into them do evidently expose themselves, of being seduc'd from their religion; not by the good arguments which the other can offer to that purpose, but by the ill arts which they have the con-

fidence and the conscience to make use of in the making of proselytes.

And let us pay our most hearty and thankful acknowledgments, chiefly and in the first place to almighty God, the blessed author of this deliverance; and under him, to that happy instrument, whom God hath been pleased, in great pity to this sinful and unworthy nation, to raise up on purpose for it, his highness the prince of Orange; and to that end did in his all-wise providence lay the foundation of our then future deliverance, in that auspicious match which was concluded here in England about eleven years ago, between this renowned prince and our excellent princess.

This is that most illustrious house of Nassau and Orange, which God hath so highly honoured above all the families of the earth, to give a check to the two great aspiring monarchies of the west, and bold attempters upon the liberties of Europe: to the one, in the last age; and to the other, in the present. As if the princes of this valiant and victorious line had been of the race of Hercules, born to rescue mankind from oppression, and to quell monsters.

And lastly, let us beseech almighty God, all whose ways and works are perfect, that he would establish that which he hath wrought, and still carry it on to further and greater perfection. Which after such an earnest of his favour and good-will to us, we have no reason to doubt but that he is ready to do for us; if by our own fickleness and inconstancy, disgusting the deliverance now it is come, which we so earnestly desired before it came; if by our ungrateful murmurings and discontents, by our own foolish heats and animosities, kindled and carried on by the ill designs of some, working upon the tenderness and scruples of others, under the specious pretences of conscience and loyalty: I say, if by some or all these ways we do not refuse the blessing which God now offers, and defeat and frustrate the merciful design of this wonderful revolution; God will still *rejoice over us, to do us good* and think thoughts of peace towards us, thoughts of good

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and not of evil, to give us an expected end of our long troubles and confusions. But if we will not know, in this our day, the things which belong to our peace, our destruction will then be of ourselves; and there will be no need that G O D should be angry with us, for we shall be undone by our own differences and quarrels about the way and means of our being saved; and so be angry with one another till we be consumed. Which G O D of his infinite goodness, give us all the grace and wisdom to prevent: for his mercies sake, in J E S U S C H R I S T, to whom, with thee, O F A T H E R, and the H O L Y G H O S T, be all honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, both now and ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XXXIII.

Of forgiving of injuries, and against revenge.

Preach'd before the Q U E E N at *Whitehall*,
March 8, 168 $\frac{8}{9}$.

M A T T H E W v. 44.

But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.

THE gospel hath promised forgiveness of sins to us upon two conditions: that we sincerely repent of the sins which we have committed against G O D; and, that we heartily forgive to men the injuries and offences which they have been guilty of towards us.

I shall at this time, by G O D's assistance, treat of the latter of these, from the words which I have recited to you ; which are part of our SAVIOUR's excellent sermon upon the mount. In which he doth not only explain, but enlarge and perfect the moral and natural law, by adding to it precepts and prohibitions of greater perfection, than either the law of Moses or the natural law, in their largest extent, did contain.

He forbids polygamy, and divorce except only in the case of adultery ; and likewise revenge ; none of which were either forbidden by the law of nature, or by the law which was given by Moses.

And to these prohibitions our blessed SAVIOUR adds several new precepts of greater perfection than any laws that were extant before. *But I say unto you, love your enemies.* The jewish law commanded them to love their neighbours, meaning their brethren and those of their own nation : but our SAVIOUR, by commanding us to love our enemies, hath in the most emphatical manner that can be commanded us to love all men. For if any were to be excluded from our charity, none so likely to be so as our enemies. So that after a command to love our enemies it was needless to name any others ; because men are naturally apt to love those that love them.

I say unto you, love your enemies ; here the inward affection is requir'd. *Bless them that curse you ;* here outward civility and affability are requir'd, in opposition to rude and uncivil language ; for so blessing and cursing do in scripture frequently signify. *Do good to them that hate you,* here real acts of kindness are commanded to be done by us to our bitterest and most malicious enemies. *Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.* These are the highest expressions of enmity that can be, calumny and cruelty ; and yet we are commanded to pray for those that touch us in these two tenderest points of all others, our reputation and our life. And to secure the sincerity of our charity towards our enemies, we are requir'd to express it by our hearty prayers to G O D for them : G O D, I say, before whom it is both impious and dangerous to dissemble ; and from whom we can expect

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mercy for ourselves, if with feigned lips we beg it of him for others.

You see what is the duty here required ; that we bear a sincere affection to our most malicious and implacable enemies, and be ready upon occasion to give real testimony of it.

And because this may seem a hard duty, and not so easy to be reconciled either to our inclination or our reason ; I shall endeavour to shew, that this law is not only reasonable, but much more perfect and excellent, and the practice of it more easy and delightful, and upon all accounts much more for our benefit and advantage, than the contrary. And that upon four considerations ; which I shall endeavour to represent with their just advantage, and so as may, I hope, not only convince our judgment of the reasonableness of this precept, but likewise bend and sway our wills to the obedience and practice of it.

I. If we consider the nature of the act here required, which is to love ; which, when it is not a mere passion, but under the government of our reason, is the most natural, and easy, and delightful of all the affections which God hath planted in human nature : whereas ill-will, and hatred, and revenge, are very troublesome and vexatious passions. Both the devising of mischief, and the accomplishment of it, and the reflection upon it afterwards, are all uneasy ; and the consequences of it many times pernicious to ourselves. The very design of revenge is troublesome, and puts the spirits into an unnatural fermentation and tumult. The man that meditates it is always restless, his very soul is stung, swells and boils, is in pain and anguish, hath no ease, no enjoyment of it : self so long as this passion reigns. The execution of it may perhaps be attended with some present pleasure, but that pleasure is unreasonable and brutish, momentary and short, like a flash of lightning, which vanisheth in the twinkling of an eye.

It is commonly said that revenge is sweet, but to a calm and considerate mind patience and forgiveness are sweeter, and do afford a much more rational and solid and durable pleasure than revenge. The monuments of

our mercy and goodness are a far more pleasing and delightful spectacle, than our rage and cruelty. And no sort of thought does usually haunt men with more terror, than the reflection upon what they have done in the way of revenge.

Besides that the consequences of this passion do commonly prove very prejudicial to ourselves. For the revenge of one injury doth naturally draw on more, and will oblige us for the same reason to a new revenge of them; and brings on a perpetual and endless circulation of injuries and revenges. So that whoever seeks revenge upon another, doth commonly in the issue take it upon himself; and whilst he thinks to transfer the injury which he hath receiv'd upon him that did it, he doubles it upon himself.

Such and so great are the troubles and inconveniences of a malicious and revengeful temper: *but there is no torment in love*, as St. John excellently says. To be kindly affection'd towards all, to bear no grudge or ill-will, no thought of displeasure or revenge towards any man, is the easiest posture, the most pleasant state of the mind. So that if not for their sakes, yet for our own, we should *love our enemies, and do good to them that hate us*; because to be thus affected towards all men, is as great a kindness to ourselves, as it is charity to others.

II. If we consider the qualification of the object; it is our enemy whom we are requir'd to love. In whom though there be something that is justly disgustful, yet there is something also that is lovely; and if we persist in our kindness to him, notwithstanding his enmity to us, the enmity may wear off, and perhaps at length be chang'd into a sincere and firm friendship.

'Tis true indeed, that with regard to ourselves, personal enmity towards us is one of the most inconvenient qualities that a man can have, but not therefore the worst in itself. If we could be impartial and lay aside prejudice we might perhaps discern several very lovely qualities in him who hates us: and virtue is to be own'd, and praised and lov'd, even in an enemy. And perhaps his enmity towards us is not so great and inexcusable a fault, as

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apprehend ; he is not perhaps our enemy to that degree, nor so altogether without cause, as we imagine ; possibly we have provok'd him, or by his own mistake, or through the malicious representation of others he may be induc'd to think so : and are not we ourselves liable to the like misapprehensions concerning others, of which we are many times afterwards convinc'd and asham'd ? and so may he, and then his enmity will cease, if we will but have a little patience with him, as we always wish in the like case that others would have with us.

* At the worst, though never so fore and causeless an enemy, though never so bad a man, yet he is a man, and as such, hath something in him which the blindest passion cannot deny to be good and amiable. He hath the same nature with ourselves, which we cannot hate, or despise, without hatred and contempt of ourselves. Let a man's faults be what they will, they do not destroy his nature and make him cease to be a man.

The two great foundations of love are relation and likeness. *No one thing, says Tully, is so like, so equal to another, as one man is to another.* What difference soever there may be between us and another man, yea, though he be our enemy, yet he is still like us in the main ; and perhaps but too like us in that for which we find so much fault with him, a proneness to offer affronts and injuries.

And there is an essential relation, as well as likeness, between one man and another, which nothing can ever dissolve, because it is founded in that which no man can divest himself of, in human nature. So far is it from being true, which Mr. Hobbes asserts as the fundamental principle of his politicks, *That men are naturally in a state of war and enmity with one another*, that the contrary principle, laid down by a much deeper and wiser man, I mean Aristotle, is most certainly true, *that men are naturally akin and friends to each other.* Some unhappy accidents and occasions may make men enemies, but naturally every man is a friend to another : and that the surest and most unalterable reason of things which

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is founded in nature, not that which springs from mutable accidents and occasions. So that whoever is recommended to us under the notion of a man, ought not to be look'd upon by us, and treated as an enemy.

Consider farther, that an enemy, even whilst he is exercising his enmity towards us, may do us many acts of real advantage; which, though they do not proceed from kindness, yet in truth are benefits. The malicious censures of our enemies, if we make a right use of them, may prove of greater advantage to us, than the civilities of our best friends. We can easily afford, nay the wisest of men can hardly forbear, to love a flatterer, to embrace him, and to take him into our bosom; and yet an open enemy is a thousand times better, and less dangerous than he. It is good for many men that they have had enemies, who have many times been to them the happy occasion of reforming those faults, which none but an enemy would have taken the freedom, I had almost said, would have had the friendship to have told them of.

But what if after all, this enemy of ours, this hated man, prove to be one of our best friends? For so reconciled friends usually are. And if any thing will reconcile an enemy, love and kindness will. An obstinate goodness is apt to conquer even the worst of men. It is hardly the nature of man to withstand the kindness of one whom, by all that we could do, we have not been able to make our enemy. After a man hath done the greatest injury to another, not only to find no revenge following upon it, but the first opportunity taken to oblige him, is so very surprising, that it can hardly fail to gain upon the worst disposition, and to melt down the hardest temper. So that we should love our enemies, if not for what they are at present, yet for what they may be, and hope that by these means they may in time become our friends.

III. If we consider the excellency and generosity of the thing itself. *To love our enemies, and to do good to them that hate us*, is the perfection of goodness, and the advancement of it to its highest pitch. It is the most

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cellent and perfect act of the greatest and most perfect of all graces and virtues, I mean charity; which by St. Paul is call'd *the bond of perfection*; and by St. James, *the perfect and the royal law*: because it inspires men with a greatness of mind fit for kings and princes, in whom nothing is more admirable than a generous goodness and clemency, even towards great enemies and offenders, so far as is consistent with the publick good. Love for love is but justice and gratitude; love for no love is favour and kindness; but love for hatred and enmity is a most divine temper, a steady and immutable goodness that is not to be stirr'd by provocation, and so far from being conquer'd that it is rather confirm'd by its contrary: for if hatred and enmity do not extinguish love, what can? This is goodness indeed; not only without merit and obligation, without invitation or motive; but against all reasonable expectation, and in despite of all temptation and the contrary.

So that to return good for evil, and love for hatred, is one of the greatest arguments of a great mind, and of deep wisdom and consideration: for naturally our first inclinations and thoughts towards our enemies, are full of anger and revenge; but our second and wiser thoughts will tell us, that forgiveness is much more generous than revenge. And a more glorious victory cannot be gain'd over another than this, that when the injury began on one part, the kindness should begin on ours. If both the ways were equally in our power, yet it is a much more winnable conquest to overcome evil with good, than with evil. By this, we can only conquer our enemy, and may perhaps fail in that; but by the other, we certainly conquer ourselves, and perhaps our enemy too; overcoming him in the noblest manner, and walking him gently 'till he be cool, and without force effectually subduing him to be our friend. This, as * one fitly compares is like a great and wise general, by art and stratagem, of the meere dint of skill and conduct, by patience and wisdom to the day; without ever striking a stroke, or shedding one drop of blood, to vanquish an enemy, and to make an

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* *Dr. Farrow.*

end of the war without ever putting it to the hazard of a battle.

Revenge is blind and rash, and does always proceed from impotency and weakness of mind. 'Tis anger that spurs men on to it; and anger is certainly one of the foolishest passions of human nature, and which commonly betrays men to the most imprudent and unreasonable things. So Solomon observes, Prov. xiv. 29. *He that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly*: and again, Eccl. viii. 9. *Anger resteth in the bosom of fools*: but to be able to bear provocation is an argument of great wisdom; and to forgive it, of a great mind: so the same wise man tells us, Prov. xvi. 32. *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city*. It is a greater thing, in case of great provocation, to calm a man's own spirit, than to storm and take a strong city.

Whereas the angry man loseth and lets fall the government of himself, and lays the reins upon the neck of the wild beast, his own brutish appetite and passion, which hurries him on first to revenge, and then to repentance for the folly which he hath been guilty of in gratifying so unreasonable a passion. For it very seldom happens that any man executes an act of revenge, but the very next moment after he hath done it, he is sorry for it, and wisheth he had not done it: whereas patience and forgiveness do wisely prevent both the mischief to others, and the trouble to ourselves, which is usually consequent upon revenge.

IV. If we consider the perfection and prevalency of the examples which the gospel proposeth to us, to allure and engage us to the practice of this duty. And these are the examples of GOD himself, and of the SON OF GOD in the nature of man.

I. The example of GOD himself. The scriptures doth frequently set before us the goodness of GOD's common providence to sinners, for our pattern. And this is the argument whereby our blessed SAVIOUR presseth this duty in the text upon us, in the verse immediately

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ter: *That ye may be the children of your heavenly FATHER, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his rain to fall on the just and the unjust, ver. 45.* The same argument Seneca also urgeth to the same purpose. *How many (says he) are unworthy of the light, and yet the day visits them? And speaking of the gods, They bestow (says he) their benefits upon the unthankful, and are ready to help those who make a bad construction and use of their kindness.* And almost in the very words of our SAVIOUR, *Etiam ingratis sol oritur, &c.* *The sun riseth even upon the most vile and profligate persons, and the seas are open to pirates.*

Thus is GOD affected towards those who are guilty of the greatest provocations towards him. He bestows upon them the gifts of his common providence; and not only so, but is ready to forgive innumerable offences to them for CHRIST's sake. This pattern the apostle, proposeth to our imitation, Eph. iv. 32. *Be ye kind, tender-hearted, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, even as GOD for CHRIST's sake hath forgiven you: be ye therefore imitators of GOD as dear children,* Chap. v. 1. This temper and disposition of mind, is the prime excellency and perfection of the divine nature; and who would not be ambitious to be like the most perfect and best of beings? And so our blessed SAVIOUR concludes this argument, in the last verse of this chapter, *Be ye therefore perfect, as your father which is in heaven is perfect; which St. Luke renders, Be ye therefore merciful, as your father which is in heaven is merciful.* So that in that very thing, which we think to be so hard and difficult, you see that we have perfection itself for our pattern. And this example ought to be of so much greater force with us, by how much greater reason there is, why we should do thus to one another, than why GOD should do thus to us. Our offences against GOD are greater, than any man ever was or could be guilty of towards us: besides, that there are many considerations which ought to tie up our hands, and may reasonably restrain us from falling suddenly upon one another, which can have no place at all against GOD. We may justly fear, that the consequence of

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our revenge may return upon ourselves, and that it may come to be our own case to stand in need of mercy and forgiveness from others; and therefore out of necessary caution and prudence, we should take heed not to set any bad example in this kind, lest it should recoil upon ourselves. We who stand so much in need of forgiveness ourselves, ought in all reason to be very easy to forgive others. But now the divine nature is infinitely above any real injury or suffering. God can never stand in need of pity or forgiveness; and yet of his own meer goodness, without any interest or design, how slow is he to anger, and how ready to forgive?

And, which comes yet nearer to us, there is also the example of the SON of GOD, our blessed SAVIOUR; who in our nature, and in case of the greatest injuries and provocations imaginable, did practise this virtue to the height: and all this for our sakes, as well as for our example. So that he requires nothing of us, but what he himself submitted to with the greatest patience and constancy of mind, in our stead, and wholly for our advantage.

He render'd good for evil to all mankind, and shew'd greater love to us, whilst we were enemies to him, than ever any man did to his friend.

He pray'd for those that despitefully used him and persecuted him. And this, not upon cool consideration after the injury was done, and the pains of his sufferings were over; but whilst the sense and smart of them was upon him, and in the very agony and bitterness of death: to the height of all his anguish, he pour'd out his soul as an offering for the sins of men, and his blood a sacrifice to GOD, for the expiation of the guilt of that very blood whereby they shed it; pleading with GOD, in the behalf of his murderers, the only excuse that was possible to be made for their malice, that is, their ignorance; and spending his last breath in that most charitable prayer for them, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

The last declaration which he made of his mind, was his love to his enemies; and the last legacy he bequeath'd

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was an earnest request to God for the forgiveness of his persecutors and murderers.

So that if any example ought to be dear to us, and effectually to engage us to the imitation of it, this of our blessed SAVIOUR should; since the injuries which he suffer'd have sav'd us from suffering, and the greatest blessing and happiness that ever befall mankind is due to this excellent example. And then with what confidence, nay with what conscience, can we pretend to share in the benefits of this example, without imitating the virtues of it?

Can we seriously contemplate the excessive kindness and charity of the SON of GOD to the sinful sons of men, after all our bitterest enmity towards him, and most cruel and injurious usage of him; and all this charity exercis'd towards us, whilst he was under the actual sense and suffering of these things: and yet not be provok'd by an example so admirable in itself, and of such mighty advantage to us, *to go and do likewise.*

But notwithstanding the power of these arguments to persuade to this duty, I must not dissemble some objections which are, I believe, in many of your minds against it; and to which for the full clearing of this matter, it will be fit to give some satisfaction. And they are these:

1. That this precept in the text does not seem so well to agree with another of our blessed SAVIOUR's, in another evangelist, Luke xvii. 3, 4. *If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.* Here our blessed SAVIOUR seems not to require forgiveness, unless he that hath done the injury declare his repentance for it; but the text plainly requires us to forgive those who are so far from repenting of their enmity, that they still pursue it, and exercise it upon us. Thus our LORD teacheth us, and thus he himself practis'd towards his persecutors.

But this appearance of contradiction will quickly vanish, if we consider that forgiveness is sometimes taken

chiefly for abstaining from revenge; and so far we are to forgive our enemies, even whilst they continue so, and though they do not repent: and not only so, but we are also to pray for them, and to do good offices to them, especially of common humanity: and this is the meaning of the precept in the text. But sometimes forgiveness does signify a perfect reconciliation to those that have offended us, so as to take them again into our friendship; which they are by no means fit for, 'till they have repented of their enmity, and laid it aside. And this is plainly the meaning of the other text.

2. It is further objected, That this seems to be a very imprudent thing, and of dangerous consequence to ourselves; because by bearing one injury so patiently, and forgiving it so easily, we invite more; and not only tempt our enemy to go on, but others also by his example to do the like: which will make ill-natur'd men to provoke us on purpose, with a crafty design to wrest benefits from us: for what better trade can a man drive, than to gain benefits in exchange for injuries?

To this I answer three things:

First, it is to be feared that there are but few so very good, as to make this kind return for injuries: perhaps, of those that call themselves christians, not one in a hundred. And he is not a cunning man that will venture to make an enemy, when there is the odds of a hundred to one against him, that this enemy of his will take the first opportunity, to take his revenge upon him.

Secondly, it is also on the other hand to be hoped, that but very few are so prodigiously bad, as to make so barbarous a return for the unexpected kindness of a generous enemy. And this is encouragement enough to the practice of this duty, if there be a probable hope that it will have a good effect; and however, if it should fall out otherwise, yet this would not be reason enough to discourage our goodness, especially since the kindness which we do to our friends is liable almost to an equal objection, that they may prove ungrateful, and become our enemies; it having been often seen that great benefits,

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such as are beyond requital, instead of making a man more a friend, have made him an enemy.

Thirdly, our SAVIOUR never intended by this precept, that our goodness should be blind and void of all prudence and discretion, but that it should be so managed as to make our enemy sensible both of his own fault, and of our favour; and so, as to give him as little encouragement, as there is reason for it, to hope to find the like favour again upon the like provocation. Our SAVIOUR commands us to do the thing, but hath left it to our prudence to do it in such a manner as may be most effectual, both to reclaim the offender, and likewise to secure ourselves against future and further injuries.

3. Lastly, it is objected, What can we do more to our best friends, than to love them and bless them, than to do good to them and to pray for them? And are we then to make no difference betwixt our enemies and our friends?

Yes surely; and so we may, notwithstanding this precept: for there are degrees of love, and there are benefits of several rates and sizes. Those of the first rate we may with reason bestow upon our friends, and with those of a second or third rate there is all the reason in the world why our enemies should be very well contented. Besides that, we may abstain from revenge, yea, and love our enemy, and wish him and do him good; and yet it will not presently be necessary that we should take him into our bosom, and treat and trust him as our intimate and familiar friend: for every one that is not our enemy, but is not fit to be our friend; much less one that hath been our enemy, and perhaps is so still. There must be a great change in him that hath been our enemy, and we must have had long experience of him before it be fit, if ever it be so, to take him into our friendship.

All that now remains, is to make some inferences from the discourse which I have made upon this argument, by way of application. And they shall be these

I. If we think it so very difficult to demean ourselves towards our enemies, as the christian religion doth plainly require us to do; to forgive them, and love them, and pray for them, and to do good offices to them, then certainly it concerns us in prudence to be very careful how we make enemies to ourselves. One of the first principles of human wisdom, in the conduct of our lives, I have ever thought to be this, to have a few intimate friends, and to make no enemies, if it be possible, to ourselves. St. Paul lays a great stress upon this, and presseth it very earnestly. For after he had forbidden revenge, *Recompense to no man evil for evil*, Rom. xii. 17. as if he were very sensible how hard a matter it is to bring men to this, he adviseth in the next words, to prevent, if it be possible, the occasions of revenge, *If it be possible, and as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men*, ver. 18: that is, if we can avoid it, have no enmity with any man. And that for two weighty reasons:

The first I have already intimated; because it is so very hard to behave ourselves towards enemies as we ought. This we shall find to be a difficult duty to flesh and blood; and it will require great wisdom and consideration, and humility of mind, for a man to bring down his spirit to the obedience of this command: for the fewer enemies we have, the less occasion will there be of contesting this hard point with ourselves.

And the other reason is, I think, yet plainer and more convincing, because enemies will come of themselves, and let a man do what he can, he shall have some. Friendship is a thing that needs to be cultivated, if we would have it come to any thing; but enemies, like weeds, will spring up of themselves without our care and toil. The enemy, as our SAVIOUR calls the devil, will sow these tares in the night, and when we least discern will scatter the seeds of discord and enmity among men, and will take an advantage either from the envy, or malice, or the mistakes of men, to make them enemies one another. Which would make one wonder to see what care and pains some men will take, to provoke

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mankind against them; how they will lay about them, and snatch at opportunities to make themselves enemies, as if they were afraid to let the happy occasion slip by them: But all this care and fear surely is needless; we may safely trust an ill-natur'd world, that we shall have enemies enough, without our doing things on our part to provoke and procure them.

But above all, it concerns every man in prudence to take great care not to make personal enemies to himself; for these are the forest and the surest of all other, and when there is an opportunity for it, will sit hardest upon us. Injuries done to the publick are certainly the greatest, and yet they are many times more easily forgiven, than those which are done to particular persons. For when revenge is every body's work, it may prove to be no body's. The general wrongs which are done to human society, do not so sensibly touch and sting men, as personal injuries and provocations. The law is never angry or in passion, and it is not only a great indecency, but a fault, when the judges of it are so. Heat of prosecution belongs to particular persons; and it is their memory of injuries, and desire to revenge them, and diligence to set on and sharpen the law, that is chiefly to be dreaded: and if the truth were known, it is much to be fear'd that there are almost as few private as publick acts of oblivion pass'd in the world; and they commonly pass as slowly, and with as much difficulty, and not till the grace and good effect of them is almost quite lost.

II. If we ought to be thus affected towards our enemies, how great ought our kindness, and the expressions of it, to be to others? to those who never disobligh'd us, or did us any injury by word or deed; to those more especially, who stand in a nearer relation to us; to our natural kindred, and to our spiritual brethren to whom we are so strongly link'd and united by the common bond of christianity, and, lastly, to our benefactors, and those who have been before-hand with us in obligation: for all these are so many special ties and endearments of men to one another, founded either in nature or religion, or in common

mon justice and gratitude. And therefore between all these and our enemies we ought to make a very wide and sensible difference, in our carriage and kindness towards them. And if we do not so, we represent our SAVIOUR as an unreasonable lawgiver, and do perversly interpret this precept of his contrary to the reasonable and equitable meaning of it. For whatever degree of kindness is here required towards our enemies, it is certain that so much more is due to others, as according to the true proportion of our ties and obligation to them they have deserved at our hands; nothing being more certain than that our blessed SAVIOUR, the founder of our religion, did never intend by any precept of it to cancel any real obligation of nature, or justice, or gratitude; or to offer violence in the least to the common reason of mankind.

III. Hence we learn the excellency and the reasonableness of the christian religion, which hath carried our duty so high in things which do so directly tend to the perfection of human nature, and to the peace of human society; and which, if all things be rightly consider'd, are most agreeable to the clearest and best reason of mankind: so that those things which were heretofore look'd upon, and that only by some few of the wiser sort, as heroic instances of goodness, and above the common rate of humanity, are now by the christian religion made the indispensable duties of all mankind. And the precepts of no other religion, that ever yet appeared in the world, have advanced human nature so much above itself, and are so well calculated for the peace and happiness of the world, as the precepts of the christian religion are: for they strictly forbid the doing of injuries, by way of prevention; and in case they happen, they endeavour to put present stop to the progress of them, by so severely forbidding the revenging of them.

And yet after all this, it must be acknowledg'd to be a very untoward objection against the excellency and efficacy of the christian religion, that the practice of so many christians is so unequal to the perfection of these precepts. For who is there in the changes and revolution

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of human affairs, and when the wheel of providence turns them uppermost, and lays their enemies at their feet, that will give them any quarter? Nay, that does not greedily seize upon the first opportunities of revenge, and like an eagle, hungry for his prey, make a sudden stoop upon them with all his force and violence; and when he hath them in his pounces, and at his mercy, is not ready to tear them in pieces?

So that after all our boasts of the excellency of our religion, where is the practice of it? this, I confess, is a terrible objection indeed; and I must intreat of you, my brethren, to help me to the best answer to it: not by any nice distinctions and speculations about it, but by the careful and honest practice of this precept of our religion.

This was the old objection against philosophy, that many that were philosophers in their opinions were faulty in their lives: but yet this was never thought by wise men to be a good objection against philosophy. And unless we will lay more weight upon the objections against religion, and press them harder than we think it reasonable to do in any other case, we must acknowledge likewise, that this objection against religion is of no force. Men do not cast off the art of physick, because many physicians do not live up to their own rules, and do not themselves follow those prescriptions which they think fit to give to others: and there is a plain reason for it, because their swerving from their own rules doth not necessarily signify that their rules are not good, but only that their appetites are unruly, and too hard and headstrong for their reason: nothing being more certain than this, that rules may be very reasonable, and yet they that give them may not follow them.

IV. The fourth and last inference from this whole discourse shall be this, that being convinced by what hath been said upon this argument, of the reasonableness of this duty, we would resolve upon the practice of it, whenever there is occasion offer'd for it in the course of our lives. I need not to put you in mind, that there is now
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like to be great occasion for it: I shall only say, that whenever there is so, nothing can be tied more strictly upon us than this duty is.

It hath often been a great comfort and confirmation to me, to see the humanity of the protestant religion, so plainly discovering itself, upon so many occasions, in the practice of the professors of it. And setting aside all other advantages which our religion hath been evidently shewn to have above popery in point of reason and argument, I cannot for my life but think that to be the best religion which makes the best men, and from the nature of its principles is apt to make them so; most kind, and merciful, and charitable; and most free from malice, and revenge, and cruelty.

And therefore our blessed SAVIOUR, who knew what was in man better than any man that ever was, knowing our great reluctance and backwardness to the practice of this duty, hath urged it upon us by such forcible and almost violent arguments, that if we have any tenderness for ourselves, we cannot refuse obedience to it. For he plainly tells us, that no sacrifice that we can offer will appease GOD towards us, so long as we ourselves are implacable to men; ver. 23d of this chapter, *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembrest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* To recommend this duty effectually to us, he gives it a preference to all the positive duties of religion: *first go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* 'Till this duty be discharged, GOD will accept of no service, no sacrifice at our hands. And therefore our liturgy doth with great reason declare it to be a necessary qualification for our worthy receiving of the sacrament, that we be in love and charity with our neighbours; because this is a moral duty, and of eternal obligation, without which no positive part of religion, such as the sacraments are, can be acceptable to GOD; especially since in this blessed sacrament CHRIST's body and blood we expect to have the forgive-

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ness of our sins ratified and confirmed to us : which how can we hope for from GOD, if we ourselves be not ready to forgive one another ?

He shall have judgment without mercy, says St. James, *who hath shewed no mercy.* And in that excellent form of prayer which our LORD himself hath given us, he hath taught us so to ask forgiveness of GOD, as not to expect it from him, if we do not forgive one another. So that if we do not practise this duty, as hard as we think it is, every time that we put up this petition to GOD, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us ;* we send up a terrible imprecation against ourselves, and do in effect beg of GOD not to forgive us. And therefore, to imprint this matter the deeper upon our minds, our blessed SAVIOUR immediately after the recital of this Prayer, hath thought fit to add a very remarkable enforcement of this petition, above all the rest ; *for if,* says he, *ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you : but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses,* Matth. vi. 14, 15.

And our SAVIOUR hath likewise in his gospel represented to us, both the reasonableness of this duty, and the danger of doing contrary to it, in a very lively and affecting parable, deliver'd by him to this purpose, Matth. xviii. 23. concerning a wicked servant, who, when his lord had but just before forgiven him a vast debt of ten thousand talents, took his poor fellow-servant by the throat, and, notwithstanding his humble submission and earnest intreaties to be favourable to him, haled him to prison for a trifling debt of an hundred pence. And the application which he makes of this parable, at the end of it, is very terrible, and such as ought never to go out of our minds ; *so likewise,* says he, *ver. 25. shall my heavenly father do also unto you, if ye do not from your hearts forgive every one his brother his trespasses.* One might be apt to think at first view, that this parable was overdone, and wanted something of a due decorum ; it being hardly credible, that a man after he had been so mercifully

fully and generously dealt withal, as upon his humble request to have so huge a debt so freely forgiven, should whilst the memory of so much mercy was fresh upon him, even the very next moment, handle his fellow-servant, who had made the same humble submission and request to him which he had done to his LORD, with so much roughness and cruelty, for so inconsiderable a sum. This, I say, would hardly seem credible; did we not see in experience how very unreasonable and unmerciful some men are, and with what confidence they can ask and expect mercy from GOD, when they will shew none to men.

The greatness of the injuries which are done to us, is the reason commonly pleaded by us why we cannot forgive them. But whoever thou art, that makest this an argument why thou canst not forgive thy brother, lay thine hand upon thine heart, and bethink thyself how many more and much greater offences thou hast been guilty of against GOD: look up to that just and powerful being that is above, and consider well, whether thou dost not both expect and stand in need of more mercy and favour from him, than thou canst find in thine heart to shew to thine offending brother?

We have all certainly great reason to expect that as we use one another, GOD will likewise deal with us. And yet after all this, how little is this duty practis'd among christians? and how hardly are the best of us brought to love our enemies, and to forgive them? and this, notwithstanding that all our hopes of mercy and forgiveness from GOD do depend upon it. How strangely inconsistent is our practice and our hope? and what a wide distance there between our expectations from GOD, and our dealings with men? How very partial and unequal are we to hope so easily to be forgiven, and yet to be so hard to forgive?

Would we have GOD, for CHRIST's sake, to forgive us those numberless and monstrous provocations which we have been guilty of against his divine majesty? And shall we not for his sake, for whose sake we ourselves are forgiven, be willing to forgive one another?

We think it hard to be oblig'd to forgive great injuries, and often repeated; and yet wo be to us all, and most miserable shall we be to all eternity, if God do not all this to us, which we think to be so very hard and unreasonable for us to do to one another.

I have sometimes wonder'd how it should come to pass, that so many persons should be so apt to despair of the mercy and forgiveness of God to them; especially considering what clear and express declarations God hath made of his readiness to forgive our greatest sins and provocations upon our sincere repentance: but the wonder will be very much abated, when we shall consider with how much difficulty men are brought to remit great injuries, and how hardly we are persuaded to restrain from flying upon those who have given us any considerable provocation. So that when men look into themselves, and shall carefully observe the motions of their own minds towards those against whom they have been justly exasperated, they will see but too much reason to think that forgiveness is no such easy matter.

But our comfort in this case is, that God is not as man; *that his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts; but as the heavens are high above the earth, so are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts.*

And the best way to keep ourselves from despairing of God's mercy and forgiveness to us, is to be easy to grant forgiveness to others: and without this as God hath reason to deny forgiveness to us, so we ourselves have all the reason in the world utterly to despair of it.

It would almost transport a christian to read that admirable passage of the great heathen emperor and philosopher * M. Aurelius Antoninus, *Can the gods,* says he, *that are immortal; for the continuance of so many ages, bear without impatience with such and so many sinners as have ever been; and not only so, but likewise take care of them, and provide for them that they want nothing: and dost thou so grievously take on, as one that can bear with*

* M. Aurel. Anton. lib. 7.

326 *Of forgiveness of injuries, &c. Ser. 33.*

them no longer? Thou, that art but for a moment of time; yea, thou that art one of those sinners thyself.

I will conclude this whole discourse with those weighty and pungent sayings of the wise son of Sirach, He that revengeth shall find vengeance from the LORD, and he will certainly retain his sins. Forgive thy neighbour that hath hurt thee, so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One man beareth hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon of the LORD? He sheweth no mercy to a man like himself, and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins? Eccles xxiii. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Enable us, O LORD, by thy grace, to practise this excellent and difficult duty of our religion: and then forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us: for thy mercies sake, in JESUS CHRIST; to whom with thee, O FATHER, and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory, adoration and obedience, both now and ever. Amen.



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S E R M O N XXXIV.

The care of our souls, the one thing
needful.

Preached before the King and Queen at
Hampton-Court, April 14, 1689.

LUKE x. 42.

But one thing is needful.

IN the accounts of wise men, one of the first rules and measures of human actions is this, *To regard every thing more or less, according to the degree of its consequence and importance to our happiness.* That which is most necessary to that end, ought in all reason to be minded by us in the first place, and other things only so far as they are consistent with that great end, and subservient to it.

Our blessed SAVIOUR here tells us *that there is one thing needful*, that is, one thing which ought first and principally to be regarded by us: and what that is, it is of great concernment to us all to know, that we may mind and pursue it as it deserves.

And we may easily understand what it is by considering the context, and the occasion of these words, which was briefly this: our SAVIOUR, as he went about preaching the kingdom of God, came into a certain village, where he was entertained at the house of two devout sisters. The elder, who had the care and management of the family and the affairs of it, was employed in making entertainment for such a guest: the other sat at our SAVIOUR's feet, attending to the doctrine of salvation which he preach'd.

The elder finding herself not able to do all the business alone, desires of our SAVIOUR that he would command her sister to come and help her. Upon this our SAVIOUR gives her this gentle reprehension, *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful.* And what that is he declares in the next words, *and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her*; that is, she hath chosen to take care of her salvation, which is infinitely more considerable than any thing else.

Our SAVIOUR doth not altogether blame Martha for her respectful care of him, but commends her sister for her greater care of her soul; which made her either wholly to forget, or unwilling to mind other things at that time. So that, upon the whole matter, he highly approves her wise choice, in preferring an attentive regard to his doctrine, even before that which might be thought a necessary civility to his person.

From the words thus explain'd, the observation which I shall make is this:

That the care of religion and of our souls is the one thing necessary, and that which every man is concern'd in the first place and above all other things to mind and regard.

This observation seems to be plainly contain'd in the text. I shall handle it as briefly as I can: and then by way of application shall endeavour to persuade you and myself to mind this one thing necessary.

And in speaking to this serious and weighty argument, I shall do these two things.

First, I shall endeavour to shew wherein this care of religion and of our souls does consist.

Secondly, to convince men of the necessity of taking this care.

I. I shall shew wherein this care of religion and of our souls doth consist. And this I shall endeavour to do with all the plainness I can, and so as every one that hears may understand and be sufficiently directed what is necessary for him to do in order to his eternal salvation.

And of this I shall give an account in the five following particulars, in which I think the main business of religion and the due care of our souls does consist.

First, in the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believed by us in order to our eternal salvation.

Secondly, in the frequent examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere repentance for all the errors and miscarriages of them.

Thirdly, in the constant and daily exercise of piety and devotion.

Fourthly, in avoiding those things which are pernicious to our salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their souls.

Fifthly, in the even and constant practice of the several graces and virtues of a good life.

I. The due care of religion and of our souls does consist in the distinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and persuasion of those things which are necessary to be known and believ'd by us in order to our eternal salvation.

For this knowledge of the necessary principles and duties of religion is the foundation of all good practice, wherein the life of religion doth consist. And without this no man can be truly religious. *Without faith, saith the apostle to the hebrews, it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,* Heb. xi. 6. Now these two expressions of pleasing God and seeking him, are plainly of the same importance, and do both of them signify religion, or the worship and service of God; which doth antecedently suppose our firm belief and persuasion of these two fundamental principles of all religion, That there is a God, and, That he will reward those that serve him: because unless a man do first believe these, there would neither be ground nor encouragement for any such thing as religion.

And this knowledge of the necessary principles of religion our blessed SAVIOUR calls eternal life, because it is so fundamentally necessary in order to our attaining of it: *This is life eternal*, says he, *to know thee the only true GOD; and him whom thou hast sent, JESUS CHRIST*, John xvii. 3. that is, to be rightly instructed in the knowledge of the only true GOD, and of his SON JESUS CHRIST our LORD: under which two general heads are comprehended all the necessary principles both of the natural and of the christian religion.

And to the attaining of this knowledge which is absolutely necessary to salvation, no such extraordinary pains and study is requir'd; but only a teachable disposition, and a due application of mind. For whatever in religion is necessary to be known by all, must in all reason be plain and easy, and lie level to all capacities; otherwise we must say, that GOD who would have all men to be saved, hath not provided for the salvation of all men. And therefore, now that the knowledge of the true GOD and the light of christianity are spread abroad in the world, all that enjoy the gospel are, or may be, sufficiently instructed in all things necessary to their happiness: unless such care be used, as is in the church of Rome, to take away the key of knowledge, and to lock up the scriptures from the people in an unknown tongue; and this, as they pretend, upon a very charitable consideration; only it is to be hop'd that it is not true, that the generality of mankind are mad and have need to be kept in the dark. But supposing men to be allowed those means of knowledge which GOD affords, and hath appointed for us, the great difficulty doth not commonly lie in mens understandings, but in their wills: only when men know these things, they must attend to them and consider them; that the light which is in their understandings may warm their hearts, and have its due influence upon their lives.

II. The due care of our souls consists in the frequent examination of our lives and actions, and in a sincere

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repentance for all the errors and miscarriages of them : in a more particular and deep humiliation and repentance for deliberate and wilful sins, so far as we can call them to our remembrance ; and in a general repentance for sins of ignorance, and infirmity, and surprise. In the exercise whereof we are always to remember, that the nature of true repentance doth not consist only in an humble confession of our sins to God, and a hearty trouble and contrition for them ; but chiefly in the stedfast purpose and resolution of a better life, and in prosecution of this resolution, in actual reformation and amendment.

By the constant exercise hereof we are put into a safe condition ; provided that we persevere in this holy resolution and course : but if we still retain the love and practice of any known sin, or if after we have taken up these good resolutions we return again to an evil course ; this is a clear evidence, either that our repentance was not sincere at first, or that we are relaps'd into our former state : and then our souls are still in apparent danger of being lost, and will continue in that dangerous state, 'till we have renew'd our repentance, and made it good in the following course of our lives.

III. The due care of our souls consists in the constant and daily exercise of piety and devotion, both in private, and in publick if there be opportunity for it, especially at proper times and upon more solemn occasions : by fervent prayer to God, and by hearing and reading the word of God with reverence and godly fear : by frequenting his publick worship, and demeaning ourselves in it with that solemnity and seriousness which becomes the presence and service of the great and glorious majesty of God, who observes our behaviour and sees into our hearts : and by receiving the blessed sacrament, as often as we have opportunity, with due preparation and devotion of mind.

For these are not only outward testimonies of our inward piety, but they are means likewise appointed by God to improve and confirm us in holiness and goodness. And
whoever

whoever neglects these duties of religion, or performs them in a slight and superficial manner, doth plainly shew that he hath neither a due sense of God, nor care of himself: for in vain does any man pretend that he does in good earnest design the end, when he neglects the best and most proper means for the attainment of it.

IV. The due care of our souls consists also in avoiding those things which are pernicious to our salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their souls. Such in general is the practice of any known sin. By this we do, as it were, run upon the sword's point, and do endanger our salvation as much as a deep wound in our body would do our life: and tho' such a wound may perhaps be cur'd afterwards by repentance, yet no man that commits any wilful sin knows the dismal consequence of it, and whither by degrees it may carry him at last: for upon such a provocation God may leave the sinner to himself, and withdraw his grace from him, and give him up to a hard and impenitent heart, to proceed from evil to worse, and from one wickedness to another, 'till he be finally ruin'd. So dangerous a thing is it knowingly to offend God, and to commit any deliberate act of sin.

More particularly, an inordinate love of the world is very pernicious to the souls of men; because it quencheth the heavenly life, and fills our minds with earthly cares and designs; it tempts men to forsake God and religion when their worldly interests come in competition with them; and betrays them to fraud, and falshood, and all kind of injustice, and many other hurtful lusts which drown the soul in perdition.

But besides these dangers which are more visible and apparent, there is another which is less discernible because it hath the face of piety; and that is faction in religion: by which I mean an unpeaceable and uncharitable zeal about things wherein religion either doth not at all, or but very little consist. For besides that this temper is utterly inconsistent with several of the most eminent christ-

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tian graces and virtues, as humility, love, peace, meekness, and forbearance towards those that differ from us; it hath likewise two very great mischiefs commonly attending upon it, and both of them pernicious to religion and the souls of men.

First, that it takes such men off from minding the more necessary and essential parts of religion. They are so zealous about small things, the tithing of mint, and anise, and cummin, that they neglect the weightier things of the law, faith, and mercy, and judgment, and the love of GOD: they spend so much of their time and heat about things doubtful, that they have no leisure to mind the things that are necessary: and are so concern'd about little speculative opinions in religion, which they always call fundamental articles of faith, that the practice of religion is almost wholly neglected by them: and they are so taken up in spying out and censuring error and heresy in others, that they never think of curing those lusts and vices and passions which do so visibly reign in themselves. Deluded people! that do not consider that the greatest heresy in the world is a wicked life, because it is so directly and fundamentally opposite to the whole design of the christian faith and religion: and that do not consider, that GOD will sooner forgive a man a hundred defects of his understanding than one fault of his will.

Secondly, another great mischief which attends this temper is, that men are very apt to interpret this zeal of theirs against others to be great piety in themselves, and as much as is necessary to bring them to heaven; and to think that they are very religious, because they keep a great stir about maintaining the out-works of religion, when it is ready to be starv'd within; and that there needs no more to denominate them good christians, but to be of such a party, and to be listed of such a church, which they always take for granted to be the only true one; and then zealously to hate, and uncharitably to censure all the rest of mankind.

How many are there in the world, that think they have made very sure of heaven, not by the old plain way

way of leaving their sins and reforming their lives, but by a more close and cunning way of carrying their vices along with them into another church, and calling themselves good catholicks, and all others hereticks? and that having done this, they are in a safe condition; as if a mere name would admit a man into heaven, or as if there were any church in the world that had this fantastical privilege belonging to it, that a wicked man might be saved for no other reason but because he is of it.

Therefore, as thou valuest thy soul, take heed of engaging in any faction in religion; because it is an hundred to one but thy zeal will be so employed about lesser things, that the main and substantial parts of religion will be neglected: besides that, a man deeply engag'd in heats and controversies of this nature, shall very hardly escape being possess'd with that spirit of uncharitableness and contention, of peevishness and fierceness, which reigns in all factions, but more especially in those of religion.

V. The due care of our souls consists in the even and constant practice of the several graces and virtues of a good life; or, as the apostle expresseth it, *in exercising ourselves always to have a conscience void of offence towards God and men.* For herein is religion best seen, in an equal and uniform practice of every part of our duty: not only in serving God devoutly, but in demeaning ourselves peaceably and justly, kindly and charitably towards all men: not only in restraining ourselves from the outward act of sin, but in mortifying the inward inclination to it, in subduing our lusts, and governing our passions, and bridling our tongues. As he that would have a prudent care of his health and life must not only guard himself against the chief and common diseases which are incident to men, and take care to prevent them; but must likewise be careful to preserve himself from those which are esteemed less dangerous, but yet sometimes do prove mortal: he must only endeavour to secure his head and heart from be-

ing wounded, but must have a tender care of every part; there being hardly any disease or wound so slight but that some have died of it: in like manner, the care of our soul consists in an universal regard to our duty, and that we be defective in no part of it: though we ought to have a more especial regard to those duties which are more considerable, and wherein religion doth mainly consist; as piety towards God, temperance and chastity in regard of ourselves, charity towards the poor, truth and justice, goodness and kindness towards all men: but then no other grace and virtue, though of an inferior rank, ought to be neglected by us.

And thus I have endeavour'd, as plainly and briefly as I could, to declare to you in what instances the due care of religion and our souls doth chiefly consist.

And I would not have any man think that all this is an easy business, and requires but little time to do it in, and that a small degree of diligence and industry will serve for this purpose: to master and root out the inveterate habits of sin, to bring our passions under the command and government of our reason, and to attain to a good degree of every christian grace and virtue: that faith and hope and charity, humility and meekness and patience may have all their perfect work; and that, as James says, *we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing*; nothing that belongs to the perfection of a good man, and of a good christian. And this, whenever we come to make the trial, we shall find to be a great and long work.

Some indeed would make religion to be a very short and easy business, and to consist only in believing what CHRIST hath done for us, and relying confidently upon it: which is so far from being the true notion of christian faith, that, if I be not much mistaken, it is the very definition of presumption. For the bible plainly teacheth us, that unless our faith work by charity, and purify our hearts and reform our lives; unless like
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Abraham's faith it be perfected by works, it is but a dead faith, and will in no wise avail to our justification and salvation. And our blessed SAVIOUR, the great author and finisher of our faith, hath no where, that I know of, said one word to this purpose, that faith separated from obedience and a good life will save any man: But he hath said very much to the contrary, and that very plainly. For he promiseth blessedness to none, but those who live in the practice of those christian graces and virtues which are particularly mention'd by him in the beginning of his excellent sermon upon the mount, of [humility, and repentance, and meekness, and righteousness, and mercifulness, and purity, and peaceableness, and patience under persecution and sufferings for righteousness sake, Matth. v. 3, 4. &c.] And afterwards in the same sermon, *Not every one* saith he, *that saith unto me, LORD, LORD, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my FATHER which is in heaven*, Matth. vii. 21. And again, ver. 24. *whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock*. And afterwards he tells us ver. 26, 27. that whosoever builds his hopes of eternal happiness upon any other foundation, than the faith of the gospel and the practice of its precepts, doth build his house upon the sand, which when it comes to be tried by the rain and the winds, *will fall; and the fall of it will be great*. And elsewhere, John xiii. 17. *ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*. And he does very severely check the vain confidence and presumption of those, who will needs rely upon him for salvation without keeping his commandments, *Why do ye call ye me, says he, LORD, LORD, and do not the things which I say?* Luke vi. 46.

Does any man think that he can be saved without loving GOD and CHRIST? And this, saith St. John, is our souls' love of GOD, that we keep his commandments, I John 3. and again, *be that saith I know him*, and by the same reason, he that saith I love him, and keep his life, w

not his commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 1 John ii. 4. If ye love me, saith our blessed LORD, keep my commandments, John xiv. 15. And again, ver. 21. he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.

Does any man think, that any but the children of GOD shall be heirs of eternal life? Hear then what St. John saith, Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous, 1 John iii. 7. and again, ver. 10. in this the children of GOD are manifest, and the children of the devil, he that doth not righteousness is not of GOD.

In a word, this is the perpetual tenour of the bible, from the beginning of it to the end. If thou dost well, saith GOD to Cain, shalt thou not be accepted? Gen. iii. 7. and again, Isa. iii. 10, 11. Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings: wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him. And in the gospel, when the young man came to our SAVIOUR to be instructed by him, what good thing he should do that he might inherit eternal life, our LORD gives him this short and plain advice, If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. Matt. xix. 17. And in the very last chapter of the bible we find this solemn declaration, Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city, that is, into heaven, which the apostle to the Hebrews calls the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD. So vain and groundless is the imagination of those, who trust to be saved by an idle and ineffectual faith, without holiness and obedience to the life.

II. I proceed now in the second place to convince us all, if it may be, of the necessity of minding religion and our souls. When we call any thing necessary, we mean that it is so in order to some end, which cannot be attained without it. We call those things the necessities of life, without which men cannot subsist and live in a

tolerable condition in this world : and that is necessary to our eternal happiness, without which it cannot be attain'd. Now happiness being our chief end, whatever is necessary to that is more necessary than any thing else ; and in comparison of that, all other things not only may, but ought to be neglected by us.

Now to convince men of the necessity of religion, I shall briefly shew, that it is a certain way to happiness : that it is certain that there is no other way but this : and that if we neglect religion, we shall certainly be extremely and for ever miserable.

First, that religion is a certain way to happiness. And for this we have G O D's express declaration and promise. The best assurance that can be. *He that cannot lye hath promised eternal life, to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality.* All the happiness that we can desire, and of which the nature of man is capable, is promised to us upon the terms of religion, *upon our denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and living soberly, and righteously and godly in this present world :* A mighty reward for a little service ; an eternity of happiness, of joys unspeakable and full of glory, for the diligence and industry of a few days : a happiness large as our wishes, and lasting as our souls.

Secondly, 'tis certain also that there is no other way to happiness but this. He, who alone can make us happy, hath promised it to us upon these and no other terms. He hath said, *that if we live after the flesh, we shall die ; but if by the SPIRIT we mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live : that without holiness no man shall see the LORD :* and, that he that lives in the habitual practice of any vice, of covetousness, or adultery, or malice, or revenge shall not enter into the kingdom of God : and we have reason to believe him concerning the terms of this happiness and the means of attaining it, by whose favour and bounty alone we hope to be made partakers of it.

And if G O D had not said it in his word, yet the nature and reason of the thing doth plainly declare it. For religion is not only a condition of our happiness, but

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necessary qualification and disposition for it. We must be like to G O D in the temper of our minds, before we can find any felicity in the enjoyment of him. Men must be purged from their lusts, and from those ill-natur'd and devilish passions of malice, and envy, and revenge, before they can be fit company for their heavenly FATHER, and meet to dwell with him, *who is love, and dwells in love.*

Thirdly, if we neglect religion, we shall certainly be extremely and for ever miserable. The word of truth hath said it, *that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil.* Nay, if G O D should hold his hand, and should inflict no positive torment upon sinners, yet they could not spare themselves, but would be their own executioners and tormentors. The guilt of that wicked life which they had led in this world, and the stings of their own consciences must necessarily make them miserable, whenever their own thoughts are let loose upon them; as they will certainly be in the other world, when they shall have nothing either of pleasure or business to divert them.

So that if we be concern'd, either to be happy hereafter, or to avoid those miseries which are great and dreadful beyond all imagination, it will be necessary for us to mind religion; without which we can neither attain that happiness, nor escape those miseries.

All that now remains, is to persuade you and myself seriously to mind this one thing necessary. And to this end, I shall apply my discourse to two sorts of persons; those who are remiss in a matter of so great concernment, and those who are grossly careless, and mind it not all.

First, to those who are remiss in a matter of such vast concernment: who mind the business of religion, in some degree, but not so heartily and vigorously as a matter of such infinite consequence doth require and deserve.

And here I fear the very best are greatly defective: and so much the more to be blamed, by how much they

are more convinc'd than others, of the necessity of a religious and holy life ; and that without this no man shall ever be admitted into the mansions of the blessed : they believe likewise, that according to the degrees of every man's holiness and virtue in this life, will be the degrees of his happiness in the other ; *that he that sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that sows plentifully shall reap plentifully* ; and that the measure of every man's reward shall be according to his improvement of the talents that were committed to him.

But how little do men live under the power of these convictions ? and notwithstanding we are allur'd by the most glorious promises and hopes, and aw'd by the greatest fears, and urg'd by the most forcible argument in the world, the evident necessity of the thing ; yet how faintly do we run the race that is set before us ? how frequently and how easily are we stop'd and diverted in our christian course by very little temptations ? how cold, and how careless, and how inconstant are we in the exercises of piety, and how defective in every part of our duty ? did we act reasonably, and as men use to do in matters of less moment, we could not be so indifferent about a thing so necessary, so slight and careless in a matter of life and death, and upon which all eternity doth depend.

Let us then shake off this sloth and security, and resolve to make that the great business of time, which is our great concernment to all eternity : and when we are immers'd in the cares and business of this life, and troubled about many things, let this thought often come into our minds, that there is one thing needful, and which therefore deserves above all other things to be regarded by us.

Secondly, There are another sort of persons, who are grossly careless of this one thing necessary, and do not seem to mind it at all : Who go on securely in an evil course as if either they had no souls, or no concernment for them. I may say to these as the master of the ship did to Jonah, when he was fast asleep in the storm, *Wakest thou, O sleeper ? arise and call upon thy God* : Should I

When our souls are every moment in danger of sinking, it is high time for us to awake out of sleep, to ply every ear, and to use all possible care and industry to save a thing so precious from a danger so threatening and so terrible.

We are apt enough to be sensible of the force of this argument of necessity in other cases, and very carefully to provide against the pressing necessities of this life, and how to avoid those great temporal evils of poverty and disgrace, of pain and suffering: but the great necessity of all, and that which is mainly incumbent upon us, is to provide for eternity, to secure the everlasting happiness, and to prevent the endless and insupportable miseries of another world. This, this, is the one thing necessary; and to this we ought to bend and apply all our care and endeavours.

If we would fairly compare the necessity of things, and wisely weigh the concerns of this life and the other in a just and equal balance, we should be ashamed to misplace our diligence and industry as we do; to bestow our best thoughts and time about these vain and perishing things, and to take no care about that better part which cannot be taken from us. Fond and vain men that we are! who are so solicitous how we shall pass a few days in this world, but matter not what shall become of us for ever.

But as careless as we are now about these things, time will come when we shall sadly lay them to heart, and when they will touch us to the quick: when we come to lie upon a death-bed, if God shall be pleas'd to grant us then for much time and use of our reason as to be able to recollect ourselves, we shall then be convinc'd how great a necessity there was of minding our souls, and of the prodigious folly of neglecting them, and of our not being sensible of the value of them, 'till we are ready to despair of saving them.

But, blessed be God, this is not yet our case, though we know not how soon it may be. Let us then be wise, and consider these things in time, lest death and despair should overtake and oppress us at once.

You that are young, be pleas'd to consider that this is the best opportunity of your lives, for the minding and doing of this work. You are now most capable of the best impressions, before the habits of Vice have taken deep root, and your hearts *be harden'd through the deceitfulness of sin: this is the acceptable time, this is the day of salvation.*

And there is likewise a very weighty consideration to be urg'd upon those that are old, if there be any that are willing to own themselves so; that this is the last opportunity of their lives, and therefore they should lay hold of it, and improve it with all their might: for it will soon be past, and when it is, nothing can call it back.

It is but a very little while before we shall all certainly be of this mind, that the best thing we could have done in this world, was to prepare for the other. Could I represent to you that invisible world which I am speaking of, you would all readily assent to this counsel, and would be glad to follow it and put it speedily in practice. Do but then open your eyes, and look a little before you to the things which are not far off from any of us, and to many of us may perhaps be much nearer than we are aware: let us but judge of things now, as we shall all shortly judge of them: and let us live now, as after a few days we shall every one of us wish with all our souls that we had liv'd; and be as serious, as if we were ready to step into the other world, and to enter upon that change which death will quickly make in every one of us. Strange stupidity of men! that a change so near, so great, so certain, should affect us so coldly, and be so little considered and provided for by us: that the things of time should move us so much, and the things of eternity so little. What will we do when this change comes, if we have made no preparation for it?

If we be christians, and do verily believe the things which I am speaking of, and that after a few days more we are pass'd, death will come, and draw aside that thick veil of sense and security which now hides these things from

from us; and shew us that fearful and amazing sight which we are now so loth to think upon: I say, if we believe this, it is time for us to be wise and serious.

And happy that man, who in the days of his health hath retir'd himself from the noise and tumult of this world, and made that careful preparation for death and a better life, as may give him that constancy and firmness of spirit, as to be able to bear the thoughts and approaches of his great change without amazement; and to have a mind almost equally pois'd between that strong inclination of nature which makes us desirous to live, and that wiser dictate of reason and religion which should make us willing and contented to die whenever God thinks fit.

Many of us do not now so clearly discern these things, because our eyes are dazzled with the false light and splendor of earthly felicity: but this assuredly is more worth than all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, to be able to possess our souls at such a time, and to be at perfect peace with our own minds, having our hearts fixed trusting in God: to have our accounts made up, and estate of our immortal souls as well settled and secur'd, as, by the assistance of God's grace, human care and endeavour, though mix'd with much human frailty, is able to do.

And if we be convinc'd of these things, we are utterly inexcusable if we do not make this our first and great care, and prefer it to all other interests whatsoever. And to this end, we should resolutely disentangle ourselves from worldly cares and incumbrances; at least so far, that we may have competent liberty and leisure to attend this great concernment, and to put our souls into a fit posture and preparation for another world: that when sickness and death shall come, we may not act our last part indolently and confusedly, and have a great deal of work to do when we shall want both time and all other advantages to do it in: whereby our souls, when they will stand most in need of comfort and support, will unavoidably be left in a trembling and disconsolate condition, and in an anxious

anxious doubtfulness of mind what will become of them for ever.

To conclude, this care of religion and our souls is a thing so necessary, that in comparison of it we are to neglect the very necessities of life. So our LORD teacheth us, Matth. vi. 31, 33. *Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.* The calls of God and religion are so very pressing and importunate, that they admit of no delay or excuse whatsoever: this our SAVIOUR signifies to us by denying the disciple, whom he had call'd to follow him, leave to go and bury his father, *Let the dead, says he, bury their dead, but do thou follow me.*

There is one thing needful, and that is the business of religion, and the care of our immortal souls, which whatever we neglect should be carefully minded and regarded by every one of us. *O that there were such a heart in us! O that we were wise, that we understand this, that we would consider our latter end!* Which God grant we may all do, in this our day, for his mercies sake in JESUS CHRIST, to whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory, now and ever. Amen.



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COR. v. 6. *Wherefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the LORD.*
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S E R M O N XXV.

COR. xi. 26, 27, 28. *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the LORD's death till he come.*

Where-

A Table of the Texts.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the LORD unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the LORD.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. p. 126

S E R M O N XXVI.

A Discourse against Transubstantiation. p. 152

S E R M O N XXVII.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15. *If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve.* p. 189

S E R M O N XXVIII.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15. *If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve.* p. 206

S E R M O N XXIX.

JEREM. xiii. 23. *Can the ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.* p. 225

S E R M O N XXX.

MATTHEW xxiii. 13. *Wo unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; and ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.* p. 249

S E R M O N XXXI.

MATTHEW xxv. 1, 2, &c. *Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish,* &c. p. 260

S E R M O

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S E R M O N XXXII.

ZRA ix. 13, 14. *And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass; seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve, and hast given us such a deliverance as this:*

Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldst not thou be angry with us 'till thou hadst consumed us, so that there should be no remnant nor escaping? P. 285

S E R M O N XXXIII.

ATTHEW v. 44. *But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.* P. 305

S E R M O N XXXIV.

LUKE x. 42. *But one thing is needful.* P. 327

The End of the Second Volume.



